

BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

MIDNAPORE



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BENGAL DISTRICT GAZETTEERS.

MIDNAPORE.

BY
L. S. S. O'MALLEY,
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PREFACE.

I DESIRE to express my obligations to Mr. W. A. Marr, I.C.S., Collector of Midnapore, and to Mr. D. Weston, I.C.S., formerly Collector of Midnapore, for their assistance in reading and revising the proofs.

L. S. S. O'MALLEY.

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GAZETTEER

OF THE

MIDNAPORE DISTRICT.

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

THE district of Midnapore, the southernmost district of the Burdwān Division, is situated between $21^{\circ} 33'$ and $22^{\circ} 57'$ north latitude and between $86^{\circ} 33'$ and $88^{\circ} 11'$ east longitude. The largest and most populous of the Bengal regulation districts, it has an area of 5,186 square miles and contains a population, as ascertained at the census of 1901, of 2,789,114 persons. Its area is, indeed, nearly equal to that of the Patālā State or the kingdom of Saxony, while it contains more inhabitants than Berār or the kingdom of Denmark. It is so called after its head-quarters station, Midnapore, situated on the north bank of the Kasai river, the name itself being a corruption of the vernacular Medinipur, meaning the city of the world.

GENERAL
DESCRIP-
TION.

On the north Midnapore is bounded by the district of Bānkurā, and on the east the river Hooghly and its tributary the Rūpnārā-yan separate it from the 24-Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly. Its southern boundary is the coast line of the Bay of Bengal, while on the west the boundary marches with the Palasore district and the Mayūrbhanj State in Orissa, and with the Singhbhūm and Mānbhūm districts of Chotā Nāgpur.

Bounda-
ries.

Owing to its geographical position, Midnapore is one of the most varied, as regards physical aspects, of the districts in Bengal. The north and north-west embrace a portion of the eastern fringe of the Chotā Nāgpur plateau, and consist of a hard laterite formation. The eastern portion has been formed out of the alluvial deposits borne down by the Hooghly and its tributaries from the great Gangetic system of Upper India, and is similar to other districts of Bengal proper. On the south-west and

Configu-
ration.

south the country, which is geographically part of Orissa, is a maritime tract, subject to tidal waves and to the inroads of the sea.

The general appearance of the district is that of a large, open and well cultivated plain, but towards the north and west gentle undulations appear, with ridges covered by a thick growth of dwarf *sal* trees and other scrub jungle, while the intervening depressions produce rich crops of rice. Partly from the poorness of the soil, and also from the ruthless way they have been cut down, large forest trees are scarce, but in the neighbourhood of some of the villages a few fine tamarind, *sal* and *mahād* trees still remain. The western boundary is more broken and picturesque, for the lower ranges of the Chotā Nāgpur hills line the horizon, the jungle assumes the character of forest, and large trees begin to predominate. The soil, however, is arid, and a considerable area is unproductive and almost uninhabited, especially in the extreme north-west where there are several hills over 1,000 feet in height. The remainder of the country is an almost level plain broken only by the sand hills which line the sea coast and stretch for some miles inland. The south and east of the district are swampy tracts with fertile rice fields producing crops that are said to be little, if at all, inferior in quantity and quality to those of the Burma coast.

**Natural
divisions.**

Broadly speaking, two natural divisions, with very distinct characteristics, may be recognized. The metalled road from Bāniganj and Bankurā, which traverses the district from north to south, passing through the station of Midnapore and onwards to Balasore and Cuttack, may be generally taken as a dividing line between them. To the east of this road the soil is purely alluvial, the country is flat, the land is fertile and fully cultivated. To the west the country is undulating, the high lands of Central India here terminating in long rolling waves of laterite rock, and most of the surface consists of alternate ridges and depressions.

The alluvial portion may be again subdivided, with greater exactness, into three divisions. First, there is a strip of purely deltaic country bordering the Rūpnārāyan and Hooghly, intersected by numerous rivers and water-courses, which are subject to tidal influence. The latter are usually connected with one another, thereby rendering it an easy matter to travel by water; and the country generally partakes of the character of the neighbouring districts of Hooghly and the 24-Parganas. This low-lying tract extends for about 20 miles inland from the Rūpnārāyan and Hooghly. The

alluvial deposit, which is then reached, seems to cover the final swells of the laterite formation. None of this formation as yet appears on the surface, but the watersheds between the streams are distinct, and the general elevation of the country is higher.

The second division consists of the littoral tract, which lies at the head of the Bay of Bengal, and is exposed to the full force of the southerly winds which are prevalent during several months of the year. Much of the tract is saliferous and has to be protected from the incursions of the sea by a long embankment. Here there is a peculiar range of sand hills extending along the coast line at an average distance of 6 miles from it. This range commences at the mouth of the Rasūlpur river, then trends inland at the mouth of the Subarnarekhā river until it reaches an extreme distance of 7 miles from the coast, after which finally bends back to the sea. On the east of the range—for so it may practically be called—there is a single ridge about half a mile in breadth, from which a flat alluvial plain stretches southwards towards the sea. In the centre and on the west there are several parallel ridges alternating with strips of alluvial land. The face of the range inland is generally abrupt, about 60 feet in height, and it overlooks a flat alluvial plain. It appears probable that this sand ridge was at one time the coast line; and that it was so for a considerable time is evident from the elevation which the sand has attained. The same process is indeed now going on along the present coast line, where a sand ridge is gradually being raised by the action of the strong southerly wind during the hot months of the year. The sea eventually appears to have made a sudden long recession in one part of the coast, and in another part it seems to have receded gradually by a succession of steps.

This sandy tract is largely occupied by the sites of villages, the huts on the ridges being usually more scattered and more interspersed with gardens than houses built in the midst of the rice lands. The sandy soil has a vegetation peculiarly its own, which is more luxuriant and more purely tropical than the flora of the low-lying lands. Water-melons requiring no artificial irrigation are extensively cultivated. A description of almond tree, which bears a luscious-looking but acid fruit, and which is said to be common in Western India, grows in large numbers. Cocoanuts and betel-palms flourish; ferns are found in profusion in shady hollows; and among other flowering plants a purple azalea and the bright scarlet *Moera*, which grows freely in Ceylon, are common. This part of the district has a certain picturesqueness of its own. In the rains there are clean sandy tracks between shady trees,

and tangled hedges of cactus or pine-apple bushes, from which one may often obtain a vista of green sloping high lands cultivated with linseed or vegetables. The distinctive feature, however, of the more sparsely populated parts of the littoral tract is the number of plantations of *bādām* trees (*Anacardium occidentale*) with thickets sheltering a few spotted deer, hyænas, jackals, hares and foxes. Near village-sites is found a dense vegetation of *nim* and *bar* trees, *punang* (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), *karang* (*Pongamia glabra*) and *pipal* trees, with clumps of bamboos, overtopped by graceful cocoanut palms, which, like date palms, grow in profusion.

The third division consists of the alluvial tract constituting the remainder of the eastern half of the district. This is a monotonous rice plain intersected by numerous waterways and tidal creeks, which are lined with embankments to protect the fields from flood water. Much of the area is waterlogged, and this is particularly the case with the tract bounded by the Kasai river on the south and the Silai river on the north. This latter tract forms a rough triangle, the base of which is the Rūpnārāyan from Tamlūk to Ghātāl, while the apex is a point 6 miles south-west of Midnapore. It is a low-lying depression formed of the combined deltas of the Kasai and Silai rivers and intersected by numerous *khāls*. The river-beds having been raised, by the constant deposit of silt, above the level of the surrounding country, the latter has to be protected from inundation by a complicated system of embankments. Many of these unfortunately obstruct the natural drainage of the country, with the result that the soil being deprived of its increment of deposit is permanently depressed, while the waterways have become choked with silt and the land below them is water-logged.

RIVER SYSTEM.

The river system of Midnapore consists of the Hooghly, of its tidal tributaries, the Rūpnārāyan, Haldi and Rasūlpur, and of their sub-tributaries. The only other river of importance is the Subarnarekhā, which enters this district from Singhbhūm and passes into the Balasore district, where it falls into the Bay of Bengal.

Hooghly.

The river Hooghly nowhere intersects the district, but flows along its eastern boundary from the point where it receives the waters of the Rūpnārāyan opposite Hooghly Point down to the Bay of Bengal. The main channel first runs along the Midnapore side of the river down the Hooghly Bight, which extends from Geonkhāli Point on the right bank of the Rūpnārāyan for a distance of $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles to Luff Point, passing by the indentation called 'Luppie's' Parlour. It then swings to the

other side along the Kukrahāti Reach, which extends for a distance of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Luff Point to Buffalo Point and is so called from the village of Kukrahāti lying midway between them on the right bank. After this, it follows the left bank along the Diamond Harbour Reach, which turns to the south along Kantabaria Reach, where the Chingri Khāl debouches into it. The channel then passes into the Kalpi Roads, which stretch from Diamond Point to Jigar Khāl. The remaining channels between the Kalpi Roads and Mud Point on the north of Saugor Island are the Outer and Inner Rangafulla, Bellary and Haldia channels; but from Kalpi to Saugor the channels constantly shift as the sands alter their shape and position. They form or wash away more or less rapidly, and do not, like the sands in the upper parts of the river, alter with the seasons with such regularity. Then, in order, come the Jellingham, Mud Point, Dredge and Auckland Channels, and then the Eden Channel, along which are the Kaukhāli (Cowoolly) Roads, which used to be a general anchorage and main channel for vessels as late as 1861-62. The most interesting places in this latter portion of the course of the Hooghly are Khejri (Kedgerie) which was formerly a reporting station for vessels, the Cowoolly lighthouse, the Hijili flat, which stretches out from the shore below the Cowoolly lighthouse, and the Hijili temple, which stands $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-west of it on a point between the mouth of the Rasūlpur river and the shore line. From Khejri to this point, and also below it, is a line of white sand hillocks interspersed here and there with a little brushwood and grass.

The Rūpnārāyan, which in the upper portion of its course is Rūpnārāyan, called the Dhalkisor and the Dwārakeswar, enters the district a few miles north-east of Ghātāl and follows a south-easterly course to Tamlūk. Here it bends to the east, and it finally falls into the Hooghly at Geonkhāli opposite Hooghly Point. It widens considerably towards its mouth, having at places a breadth of nearly 3 miles. The river nowhere intersects the district but follows a rather tortuous course along the boundary. It is influenced by the tide throughout this portion of its course, and a bore ascends it in summer as far as the mouth of the Bakshi Khāl. During the dry months brackish water is found as far as Kolā Ghāt, but during the rainy months the salt water is driven out by the volume of fresh water brought down from up-country. It is nowhere fordable and is navigable by boats and small steamers throughout the year. Several islands are found in the river channel, while accretions in the shape of grass-covered ~~islands~~ are not infrequent, especially near Suddighi

6 miles north of Tamlūk, where even small steamers are apt to ground at low tides. The river is crossed by the Bengal-Nāgpur Railway line at Kolā Ghāt.

Silai.

The principal tributary of the Rūpnārāyan is the Silai or Silabati. This river enters Midnapore from the Mānbhūm district on the north and follows a tortuous course. It runs first in an easterly direction through the north of the Midnapore (Sadar) subdivision, then turns to the south-east and south through the Ghātāl subdivision. Near Nārājol it takes a sharp turn to the north, and eventually it falls into the Rūpnārāyan at Bandar, 4 miles below Ghātāl. The Silai is navigable throughout the year for a short distance in its lower reaches, which are within tidal influence. It is fed by two small streams from the Bānkura district on the north, the Purandar and Gopa, and by the Chandur and Kubai in Midnapore, but its largest tributary is the Buri, which takes its rise in the north-west of the district and flows east till it empties itself into the Silai near Nārājol.

Haldi.

The Haldi river is the next tributary of the Hooghly south of the Rūpnārāyan. It is formed by the confluence of the Kasai and Kalianghai opposite Tengrākhali on the western extremity of the Tamlūk subdivision, through which it flows south-east till it falls into the sea. The Haldi is a large river at its mouth and is navigable throughout the year, but navigation is difficult at low tides owing to sandbars. It is moreover a treacherous river, subject to occasional tidal bores and at all times noted for its swift strong current. It also contains many shifting shoals, and a rapid deposit of silt is going on in its bed. This is probably chiefly due to the diversion of a portion of the Kasai water through the Midnapore High Level Canal into the Rūpnārāyan, as a result of which the surplus waters of the Kasai are insufficient to scour the bed of the Haldi with their former efficiency. The Haldi has several minor feeders and offshoots, especially in the marshy country near its mouth, where there are many small water-courses and tidal creeks.

Kasai.

The principal tributary of the Haldi is the Kasai, which enters the district in the north-west from Bānkurā. It follows an exceedingly tortuous course, running first south and south-west and then eastwards past the town of Midnapore, which is situated on its north bank. Below Midnapore the channel contracts rapidly, till at Kapāstikri, 13 miles lower down, it bifurcates, one small branch going north and eventually falling into the Rūpnārāyan, while the main channel runs south-east till it falls into the Haldi near Itamogra in thāna Mahisādal. During the

rainy season the Kasai is navigable by large boats from its mouth to Pānskura, but in the dry weather they can ply only where the river is subject to tidal influence, i.e., for a few miles above its confluence with the Haldi. It is said that more than 100 years ago the Kasai was diverted from an old channel a little above Pānskura and carried southwards to the present channel, by which it makes its way into the Haldi; the latter is still called the Nayā Katan, or new cut.

The Kasai is embanked throughout the lower part of its course; as a result of the embanking, combined with the action of the tide and the large amount of silt it carries, the bed of the river is silting up, chiefly at the point up to which the tide flows.

The second tributary of the Haldi is the Kaliaghai, which rises in the west of the Midnapore district and flows in an easterly direction through the Nārāyanganr and Sābang thānas till it unites with the Kasai to form the Haldi. This river and its feeders drain a considerable area between the Kasai and Subarnarekhā rivers immediately to the south of the town of Midnapore, but it is a dying river and it is expected that in time it will be unnavigable. Kaliaghai.

The Rasūlpur river is the last tributary of the Hooghly within the Midnapore district. It takes its rise in the south-west of the district under the name of the Bagda river and flows eastwards as far as Kālinagar, where it changes its name and as the Rasūlpur takes a south-easterly course till it falls into the Hooghly below the Kaukhāli (Cowoolly) lighthouse. This river furnishes a large area with water communication, for though the Rasūlpur itself is of no great length, it has several large feeders. The first of these is the Sadar Khāl, which flows from the north-east and joins the Rasūlpur about 7 miles from the sea. The Rasūlpur river then takes the name of the Bagda, and about 3 miles further up the Sarpai comes in from the south. At Chaumukh, 7 miles above the junction with the Sarpai, the Bagda divides into several branches, the most important of which used to be navigable as far as Bālighai. The old channel, however, has now silted up and has been replaced by an artificial channel known as the Bālighai branch canal, down which a large volume of water gathering from numerous small nullahs pours into the Rasūlpur. Rasūlpur.

The Subarnarekhā is the only other river of Midnapore requiring notice. It enters the district on the north-west from Dhalbhūm and passes through the south-west of the Midnapore (Sadar) subdivision intersecting the Gopiballabhpur thāna. South Subarna-
rekhā.

of Dāntan it enters the Balasore district and finally falls into the Bay of Bengal. The Subarnarekhā has a rapid stream with a sandy bed, and its banks are generally high and well defined. In seasons of high flood the river overflows its left bank about 4 miles above the point where it leaves Midnapore to enter the Balasore district. The flood then takes a line eastwards and formerly found an outfall through the low-lying *pargana* of Sibpur into the Pichabāni Khāl, as the inland portion of the Sola Mohan estuary is called. This tract of country is now protected by the Jokai embankment, which is some 7 miles long and stretches northwards from the sand ridge near the coast 15 miles from the Subarnarekhā.

CHANGES
IN THE
RIVER
COURSES
RUP-
NĀRĀYAN.

Within historic times great changes have taken place in the course of some of the rivers and especially in the lower portion of the Rūpnārāyan. This river was known to Europeans up to the eighteenth century by a number of different names. It is called Ganga in the maps of Gastaldi (1561) and De Barros (1553-1613), Guenga in Blaeu's map (1650), Tamalee in Bowrey's chart of the river Hooghly (1687), Tomberlie in the pilot chart of 1703, *Patraghatta* in Valentyn's map (1670), and finally the Rūpnārāyan by Rennell, who refers to it as falsely called the "Old Ganges". Similarly, in the older accounts, such as the "Da Asia" of De Barros, it went under the name of Ganga and in the later accounts of the seventeenth century as Tumblee (Hedges), Tumberleen (Master) and Tombole (Bowrey). From Valentyn's map it appears that a large branch of the Dāmodar fell south into the Rūpnārāyan above Tamlūk, while another branch running east fell into the Bhāgirathī (Hooghly) near Kālnā. The main channel of the Dāmodar is still connected with the Rūpnārāyan by the Kānā Dwārakeswar, and it is not unlikely that, as shown in Valentyn's map, a large stream flowing past Arambagh and Khānākul (in the Hooghly district) joined the Rūpnārāyan somewhere near Ghātāl. By these two branches boats could have passed without much difficulty from the Bhāgirathī to the Rūpnārāyan, and this connection probably led to the idea of its being a branch of the Ganges.

The next noticeable fact is that the Rūpnārāyan is shown in the older maps (Gastaldi, De Barros and Blaeu) as discharging itself by two channels enclosing a large island at its mouth. The south-easterly channel disappears in Valentyn's map, Bowrey's chart and the pilot map of 1703; and it may be presumed that the island became more or less joined to the mainland in Midnapore. The Tingerooly river of Rennell (Plate VII), which was joined at Tingerooly by a

stream from Tamlūk may be identified {with the modern Haldi; and thāna Sutaḥātā and part of thāna Tamlūk are apparently comprised in the island shown in the old maps. Other effects of this change were the ruin of Tamlūk as a sea-port and the gradual formation of the James and Mary Sands.

Another change has taken place with respect to Khejri (Kedgerree) in the Contai subdivision. In the maps of De Barros and Blaeu sand banks are shown on the coast, indicating the formation of an island. In Valentyn's map and Bowrey's chart two islands are shown distinctly, one above the other, the upper one being the island of Khejri and the lower one the island of Hijuli. They are mentioned also in contemporaneous accounts, such as the factory records and the diaries of the East India Company's Agents. In 1687, when the English made war against the Nawāb of Bengal, Job Charnock seized the island of Hijuli and, after fortifying it, held it for months against the Nawāb's army. Both the islands appear in the pilot chart of 1703, and they continued to be shown in the maps down to a later date, *e.g.*, in Bolt's map of Bengal (*circa* 1770) and Whitchurch's map (1769). In Rennell's Atlas (Plates VII and XIX) the islands no longer appear, presumably because they had been joined to the mainland in the same way as the Kukrahāti-Tamlūk island above mentioned.

The shoals and sand banks in the Hooghly have changed Hooghly so frequently that an account of them would occupy an undue amount of space. On this point it will be sufficient to quote from the report on the river Hooghly written by Mr. Leonard in 1865. "The section of the Hooghly from Kālpi to the sea partakes more of the nature of an estuary than of a river, its sectional area bearing little relation to the quantity of water which it has to discharge, while the upper portion is a well-defined channel, only capable of carrying off the high floods coming down it. The water passing through this upper portion is not enough to scour out the whole of the estuary. When it reaches the wide area, a portion spreads over it, loses some of its velocity, and drops a certain class of its silt; and the remainder passes on with the ebbing water of the estuary, scouring out one or more channels on its way. These channels become the navigable portion of the estuary; the rest of it remains a wide area of comparatively shallow water, dotted with banks of loose, half-floating sand, which can be moved about as easily as water itself. It can be well understood that a channel formed in this way, through such materials,

cannot be of a very fixed character. An unusually strong tide, a gale of wind, or a sunken ship, may give a new direction the strong portion of the current, and so change it."

Regarding the formation of bars in the channels, Mr. Leonard wrote:—"The way in which these bars are formed, and move after formation, is curious and interesting. They make their appearance in the upper part and gradually move southwards till they go right out of the channel There are peculiarities connected with them not usually found in the formation of ordinary river shoals. These are, that the causes for their formation are being constantly and rapidly reproduced; the river is being widened, or the abrupt bend is being made daily; the channels are incessantly being redressed or reshaped and hence the bars are constantly re-forming and moving up and down, adapting themselves to the new form of channel. These constant changes in the form of channel are the consequence of the sides not being able to resist the least cutting action of the current. Hence the primary cause and the peculiar nature of the bars is owing to the extreme mobility of the materials forming the sides of all the channels which they occupy. The same description and remarks apply to all the bars formed in the lower section of the river. They do not all move with equal rapidity, but they do move, and change their shape and size, from the same cause that has been described above."

GEOLOGY. The characteristic formation of the district is laterite, which occupies nearly the whole country in the north and west, but in the south and east gradually gives way to the ordinary alluvium of the Gangetic delta. In the north-west of the district micaceous schists crop up from beneath the lateritic flats in a stream near the village of Silda, and about 8 miles further west a low ridge rises rather suddenly from the lateritic plain, of which it here forms the boundary. This ridge is formed of grey and bluish-grey micaceous schists with bands of more gneissose character, some of the beds being very similar to those seen in the stream near Silda. To the west of this ridge there is a group of hills of irregular shape, which have no general bearing, but occur rather in isolated masses separated by valleys. These hills are principally composed of hard grey and greyish-white gritty quartzites, associated with which are large masses or irregular veins of vein-quartz; as a whole, the rocks are much twisted and contorted. Bands of quartzose grits generally form the precipitous peaks which are dotted over this area; while blue slates and traps occur in the lower ground and in the valleys between them. All over these hills, but more

especially in those to the extreme north, are scattered masses of iron-slag, the refuse of former iron smeltings.

The lateritic rocks cover a large area, but in the majority of cases the only variety visible at the surface is a gravelly, pisolitic and nodular rock. In very few places are any good sections of this rock exposed, and its general appearance is that of a continuous layer spread over the country, swelling here and there with a gently undulating surface, the waving rolls of which are slightly elevated above the adjoining alluvial plains. The rise in the ground is, in fact, so gradual that the difference of level is only noticed when seen from a little distance. These long, low swells of lateritic gravel and laterite are chiefly covered with low coppice, with occasional patches of grassy land, but their dry, parched, and stony soil is ill-adapted for cultivation. A peculiar feature, which may be generally noticed in Bānkurā, is observable here also, viz., that this great sheet of laterite appears invariably to dip under the small alluvial flats on both sides of the long swelling undulations, and to rise again beyond them.

Throughout the district the surface, or detrital, laterite contains, in more or less abundance, small rounded fragments of other rocks. The proportion in which these occur in the ferruginous matrix of the rock is very variable. Occasionally they constitute the mass of the rock, and the laterite then becomes a coarse gritty sandstone of red colour, which does not differ in lithological character from many sandstones of very different geological date. Often the rock becomes conglomeratic, pebbles of quartz and rounded fragments of other rocks being imbedded in it. Near Midnapore these pebbles are coated, as in other ferruginous conglomerates, with oxide of iron, and near Jauphula, about 4 miles south of Midnapore, large pieces of quartz and jaspers rock, and worn fragments of other rocks are of common occurrence.

From this coarse conglomeratic variety every gradation may be traced into a homogeneous pisolitic mass composed of small, nearly spherical nodules of sandy ferruginous matter, which, generally speaking, are arranged in concentric layers with a black or nearly black central spot, or nucleus. The latter is occasionally composed of magnetic iron, but it is often decomposed and is then in the state of a yellowish ochre, or it may have disappeared and left a small cavity. One of the most remarkable features about the rock is the extraordinary regularity or uniformity in the size of the small nodular concretions, or rounded masses. Few of them are so much as one inch in diameter, and the prevailing

size is from one-half to three-quarters of an inch; indeed, over many square miles it would be almost impossible to discover a single nodule double this average size.

Frequently the detrital or nodular laterite is like a loose gravel, each nodule being separate, but not uncommonly it has been cemented into a solid mass, which can be quarried like any other rock. Many places may be seen in pits along the roadsides, where this gravelly laterite is extracted as road metal, for which it is admirably adapted; and in these pits the connection of the more solid variety with the more loosely coherent may be traced. In all cases it seems to have resulted from a re-consolidation or subsequent cohesion of the previously free particles or nodules; and this seems to have been produced by the infiltration of water, which, decomposing and partially taking up the iron, has again redeposited it, forming a cement between the nodules. This recementing is always seen along lines of jointing or cracks, by which such water has trickled through the rocks, and the solid portions are seen irregularly disposed along the irregular directions of such infiltration. These recemented masses of nodular laterite (*lankar*), formed from the already dried-up and exposed particles, generally fall to pieces on exposure. In this respect, as in others, they differ from the more moist and clayey varieties of laterite, the peculiar character of which is that it becomes harder on exposure and desiccation.

In very few places can the actual contact of the laterite with the underlying rocks be traced. Close to Midnapore, however, an excellent section is exposed near Gop House. Here what looks like the decomposed upper surface of the gneissose rocks can just be traced, but they are nowhere sufficiently exposed to enable a definite opinion of their character to be formed. This soft and clayey mass with sharp angular pieces of quartz is here and there cemented by peroxide of iron into a mass closely resembling the ordinary laterite of the country. The laterite itself is of very variable thickness, being in places not more than a foot or two, while under Gop House more than 50 feet are exposed of solid blocky laterite, arranged in large tabular masses or beds which have a slight dip or inclination to the south. This rests upon a greyish-white and reddish clay, soft, soapy and felspathic, which is in most respects like the ordinary kaolin clay resulting from the decomposition of felspathic rocks. There is in this locality no passage observable between the two rocks. The clay below is but slightly impregnated with iron, which, in fact, only shows in ferruginous patches or stains; while the mass of the laterite above, in immediate

junction, is of the most typical character. All this laterite contains rounded fragments and pebbles of other rocks of small size, the clay beneath being quite free from such admixture. The non-porous clay referred to just above, which is covered by the open and fissured laterite above, forms the water level of the district; some cases are known of wells, which have been sunk through the laterite, passing through some 60 feet and meeting no water until they reach the clay below.*

There are few districts in Bengal in which the varieties of soil and vegetation are so great. The country to the east is flat and alluvial, and its flora corresponds to that of Bengal, a large area consisting of low-lying swampy land laid out in rice fields. The tract to the west is lateriferous, undulating and even hilly, and possesses a flora closely approximating to that of Chotā Nāgpur; some parts are entirely waste, while other parts contain jungles of small *sal*, *kusum* and *piśāl*; the tree last named, which yields a valuable wood, is fairly abundant. BOTANY.

The former tract is an extension of the rice swamp of Central Bengal, and consequently the vegetation is almost entirely aquatic or palustrine, species of *Sagittaria*, *Aponogon*, *Potamogeton*, *Butomopsis*, *Utricularia*, *Vallisneria* *Stratiotes*, *Nymphaea* and the like being abundant. Towards the south-east and near the river Hooghly the conditions resemble those of the savannah swamps of the Sundarbans, the principal species being *nal* grass (*Phragmites Karka*). The western part of the district is undulating, and is largely covered with jungle consisting of *Shorea robusta* (*sal*) or of a mixed forest, in which species of *Aglaia*, *Schleichera*, *Schrebera*, *Terminalia*, and similar trees, with many shrubs and climbers, are conspicuous. The open country between these forests has a park-like appearance, and is sprinkled with different kinds of *Ficus*, *Bassia*, *Butea*, tamarind, etc.

There are no reserved or protected forests in the district, but there are several unclassified forests within the permanently-settled estates. These forests consist mainly of small *sal*, the trees being generally cut down when only eight or nine years old and exported to Calcutta for building purposes. Other trees commonly found in these forests are *mahuā* (*Bassia latifolia*), the tamarind and *pālā* (*Butea frondosa*), besides *kusum* and *piśāl*, which have been already mentioned. The jungle products consist of lac, tussar cocoons, wax,

* *Geological Structure of Bānkura, Midnapore and Orissa*, Mem., Geo. Surv. Ind., I., 250, 253-60, 269-73.

resin, *dhatura*, firewood and various jungle roots. Among marsh products may be mentioned the *hogla* rush, which is used for making mats and for thatching, the *sola* plant yielding an useful pith, and the *Cyperus segetinus*, a sedge used for making the mats for which Midnapore is famous.

ZOOLOGY. The carnivora of Midnapore are represented by tiger, Wild ani- leopard, bear, hyæna, foxes, jackals and smaller animals. male. The ungulata include *sāmbur*, spotted deer, barking deer, ravine deer and wild pig. Wild elephants are occasionally seen, but they are chance migrants from Mayūrbhanj. The carnivora and larger fauna generally are now only to be found in the western portion of the district, where there are lateritic uplands for the most part covered with *sā* jungle. Before the opening up of the district by railways, and the destruction of the jungle which has accompanied extension of cultivation, tiger, leopard, pig and deer were to be found in the eastern alluvial portion of the district, especially near the mouths of the Haldi and other rivers. The annals of the old Calcutta Tent Club contain references to the sport obtained in Tamlūk, and old cultivators there mention the name of Lord Mayo as having visited the place for sport. Now the only tigers and leopards seen there are occasional visitors from the Sundarbans or from the western jungles. There were also many wild buffaloes in the south of the district in former years, but these have all disappeared with the extension of cultivation and growth of population.

Tigers, which at one time were fairly plentiful, especially in the west and south, are now very rare, but are met with in the hilly country on the west close to the borders of the Singhbhūm district. One was shot two or three years ago near Nayāgrām, and occasionally one or two wander in from Mayūrbhanj and Orissa. Leopards, on the other hand, have maintained their numbers and have even increased in the north of the district. There they commit depredations among cattle and goats, sometimes also killing human beings. In 1905 one got into a village about 6 miles from Midnapore and killed one man and severely mauled another before it was shot. Bears are still plentiful in the west, the abundance of white-ants' nests, honey-combs, and *mahua* trees in this portion of the district affording them ample food. Hyænas are found in the jungles bordering villages, and the civet cat, jungle cat and fox are common.

Wild pigs were found in great numbers in the south of the district thirty years ago, and afforded some of the best pig-sticking in Bengal. They are still fairly numerous, but are now mostly found in the *sā* jungles in the north and west. They sometimes

do damage to crops, but they fall an easy prey to the Santāls, who keep their numbers down. The *sāmbār* is rare, but is met with in the north and west, and so also are spotted deer, barking deer, ravine deer and four-horned antelope. Large herds of spotted deer existed in Contai about thirty years ago, but are now extinct there. Hares are common.

The game birds of the district consist of jungle-fowl, pea-fowl, grey and black partridge, various kinds of quail, grey lag and bar-headed geese, and wild duck of almost every description. Amongst the latter the red-headed pochard, gadwal, pintail and pearl-eyed pochard are the most common. The following varieties of teal are found scattered throughout the district:—the blue-winged teal, cotton teal and whistling teal. Snipe are fairly numerous in parts, and the golden plover is also met with. These birds all suffer from the indiscriminate destruction of game by the aboriginal tribes inhabiting the jungles, and all, except the migratory kinds, are decreasing in number.

The estuaries and tidal waters of the Hooghly, Rasūlpur, Fish. Haldi and Rūpnārāyan constitute valuable fisheries owing to their large area and the prolific supply of fish found in them. Fishing takes place in the autumn and cold weather from October to March, after which a strong south wind sets in. The busiest season is from November to February, when parties of fishermen take advantage of the calm weather to venture out along the sea board. There is not much fishing in the non-tidal rivers, for being almost dry in the hot weather they contain few fish. There is a fair amount of estuarine fish in the Orissa Coast Canal, and the fishery rights in it are let out in sections, usually by auction. Crustaceans, such as shrimps, prawns and crabs, are numerous, and the curious horse-shoe crab is found at Chāndpur on the coast.

The following venomous species of Ophidia are found:—The cobra (*Naja tripudians*), karait (*Bungarus coerulesus*), rāj-sāmp or banded karait (*Bungarus fasciatus*) and Russell's viper (*Vipera Russellii*). There are also poisonous sea snakes along the coast. Among the non-venomous snakes, which are numerous, may be mentioned the python (*Python molurus*), the dhāman (*Zamensis Mucosus*), the green tree snake, the lycodon, the checkered snake (*Tropidonotus*) and other ground and burrowing snakes (*Typhlops*). The magar or common snub-nosed crocodile and the gharial (*Gacialis gangeticus*) are found in tidal waters, and fresh-water and mud turtles in rivers and large tanks. The large lizard known as the monitor, or pui-sāmp, is common, and the tree chameleon is found in the west, besides numerous

other small tree and ground lizards, and also some of the snake-like lizards or skinks (*Scincidae*).

Insects.

The various orders of insects are well represented. There are diurnal and nocturnal Lepidoptera of various kinds, among them being varieties of silk worm (*Bombyx Mori*) and tusser worm. Among the Mantidæ is the curious rose-leaved insect called *Gongylus gongylides*, which has been found near the station of Midnapore. Crickets, grass, hoppers, cockroaches, termites, many species of diptera, bees, wasps, ants, ichneumon flies, and many of the Coleoptera abound.

CLIMATE.

The climate of the arid stretches in the north and west of the district is very different from that of the swamps in the east and south. In the latter tract the climate is like that of the 24-Parganas, being hot and humid. In the former tract it is like that of Singhbhūm, being characterized by a fierce dry heat in the hot weather, a short cold weather and a moderate rainfall.

Rainfall.

In the cold weather months of November and December only a fraction of an inch falls monthly, such rain as there is being due to the northward movement of cyclonic storms from the south of the Bay of Bengal. From about the end of December, when the northerly trade wind has become established, cold season storms are caused by shallow depressions, which originate in the north-west of the Bay and move eastward. During their passage they cause general cloudy weather and light rainfall. These depressions continue during the hot weather months, but after the southerly winds have commenced, thunderstorms are as frequent a feature as they are the reverse in January and February.

At the end of January or the beginning of February local sea breezes commence. They increase in force and extend their influence further inland with the increasing temperature of the hot weather months. There occur occasionally during those months, and with greater frequency as the season advances, periods of atmospheric disturbance, the most important feature of which is the occurrence of local hot weather storms usually called nor'-westers. These thunderstorms are generally accompanied by heavy showers, but the rainfall in March and April is only 2 inches a month. In May there is a rapid increase owing to the occasional incursion of cyclonic storms, and the rainfall consequently rises to over 5 inches. During the monsoon season the weather conditions in Midnapore are very much the same as in other parts of South-West Bengal. The rainfall is maintained chiefly by cyclonic storms, which form in the north-west angle of

the Bay and influence weather over the whole of the south-west of the Province, and by inland depressions which form over the central districts of Bengal and move slowly westward.* The following table shows the average rainfall recorded at the different rain-registering stations during the cold, hot and rainy seasons :—

Station.	Years. recorded.	November to February.	March to May.	June to October.	Total.
Contai ...	81	3·15	7·38	56·14	66·67
Dantan ...	7-8	0·83	7·84	47·74	56·41
Garhbetā ...	15-16	1·62	7·88	49·18	58·68
Ghatal ...	24-25	1·90	8·84	48·82	59·56
Kukrahāti ...	13-14	2·34	7·76	50·03	60·13
Midnapore ...	37-42	2·23	8·22	47·57	58·02
Pānakura ...	7-8	1·04	8·33	47·94	57·31
Tamlūk ...	30-31	1·98	8·23	48·57	58·78
Average	1·89	8·06	49·50	59·45

In Midnapore, as in some of the more westerly districts of South-West Bengal, where the surface soil is composed of red laterite and the hot westerly winds from Central India penetrate at times, exceptionally high day temperatures are a feature of the hot weather months. The mean maximum temperature, which is on an average 80° in December, rises to 85° in February, 94° in March and 102° in April and May. Thereafter there is a steady fall until the monsoon is established.

From about the middle of March a strong breeze begins to blow from the south, and continues through the hot weather. From the beginning of June these local sea breezes are replaced by the steadier sea winds of the south-west monsoon, which blows till the month of October. This is followed by a short calm lasting till about the middle of November, and broken only by cyclones, occasionally accompanied by storm-waves, which are never so severe or so disastrous as during this period. The north wind then sets in, and lasts generally till about the end of February.

Cyclones from the Bay of Bengal are a frequent feature of the whole period during which the south-west monsoon current prevails. They are all marked by the same features of vortical air motion, progressive advance from the interior of the Bay towards the coast, and very heavy rainfall over and near the area of cyclonic disturbance. They differ very consider-

ably, however, in extent and intensity. Those which occur in the rains proper (i.e., from June to September) are generally small in extent, the barometric depression at the centre seldom exceeding half an inch, while the air motion, though violent, is rarely of hurricane force. The most destructive cyclones are those which are occasionally generated during the transition periods antecedent and subsequent to the full establishment and prevalence of the south-west monsoon in Northern India, i.e., during April and May, October and November. A description of some of these cyclones will be found in the chapter on Natural Calamities.

The following table gives the salient meteorological statistics for the town of Midnapore, which is situated 149 feet above sea level:—

MONTH.	Monthly mean & A.M. temperature.	Monthly maximum temperature.	Monthly minimum temperature.	Monthly mean temperature of the day.	Monthly mean & A.M. humidity.	Monthly average rainfall.	Monthly mean wind direction at 6 A.M.	Monthly average wind velocity in miles per hour.
	Degree	Degree	Degree	Degree	Per cent	Inches	Degree.	
January...	61.8	81.0	55.3	67.2	68.3	0.55	N. 3 W.	3.4
February ..	67.6	84.6	59.5	71.2	67.0	0.70	N. 6 W.	4.9
March ..	70.5	94.3	60.5	71.0	65.7	1.39	S. 16 W.	5.3
April ..	83.2	102.3	70.1	85.5	60.1	1.62	S. 2 E.	6.6
May ..	85.1	109.8	77.7	86.5	74.9	5.21	S. 8 E.	7.3
June ..	87.5	95.2	78.8	86.7	82.9	10.30	S. 16 E.	6.2
July ..	89.3	87.8	78.2	86.7	85.8	11.90	S. 16 E.	4.8
August ..	89.0	86.8	77.7	85.0	87.8	19.14	S. 33 E.	4.1
September ..	82.2	86.3	77.2	83.0	86.0	8.72	S. 43 E.	4.3
October ...	78.9	88.9	72.3	80.4	79.2	4.42	N. 3 E.	3.6
November ..	70.1	83.4	62.4	72.3	73.4	0.55	N. 3 W.	3.1
December ..	62.0	79.0	54.7	66.2	67.8	0.21	N. 0 W.	3.3
Year (average)	76.3	89.8	70.0	79.3	75.6	58.62	..	4.7

Mean of maxima and minima temperature corrected to true diurnal means by applying the corrections determined from the hourly observation data of Calcutta (Alipore).

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY.

In the early ages the east of the district—a tract only slightly above sea level and intersected by numerous waterways, which was apparently washed then, as now, by the sea and by the Hooghly estuary—was occupied by tribes or communities of fishermen, boatmen and sailors. It is known that at the dawn of history Tāmralipti (the modern Tamlūk) was a great sea port; while the country round it was a stronghold of Kaibarttas, a fishing and boating caste mentioned in the Pillar Edict V of Asoka as Kevata, and in the *Vajasaneyi Samhita* (Yajur-veda) as Kevartta. The tract along the western border, now known as the Jungle Mahāls, which is still covered with the remains of forest, was the home of nomadic tribes who lived on jungle products and the spoils of the chase. Among them were the Savaras, a powerful race that can be traced as far back as the *Aitareya-Brahmana*, and other aboriginal tribes, who spread over the country from the Ganges to the Godāvari. Their descendants may be identified with the nomadic Sahars of the present day and the Lodhās, a tribe of hunters, as their name (a corruption of the Sanskrit *śuddhaka*, i.e., hunters) implies. The remarkable group of memorial pillars at Kiārchand in thāna Gopiballabhpur may possibly date back to this period. Between the Jungle Mahāls and the sea-board lay the routes connecting Magadha and Suhma on the north with Kalinga on the south. It is not clear whether this borderland (*pratyanta-deśa*) was included in the empire of Chandragupta (321-297 B.C.), but probably it was, for he took over from his predecessor, Nanda, the sovereignty of the country of the Gangaridā, i.e., Bengal, which probably included Tāmralipti. Chandragupta's dominions are, moreover, said to have extended from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal, and it is not likely that he would have failed to secure such an important port as Tāmralipti.*

* V. A. Smith, *Asoka* (1901), p. 69; *Early History of India* (1904), p. 311

Mauryan
rule.

However this may be, it seems certain that, on the conquest of Kalinga by his grandson Asoka (*circa* 261 B.C.), the district became part and parcel of the great Mauryan empire and shared in its civilization, Tāmralipti being the principal port on the Bay of Bengal. Asoka himself is said to have erected a stūpa at Tāmralipti,* and the Buddhist legends mention it as the port where travellers landed from and embarked for Ceylon. It was here, they relate, that the nephew and envoys of the king of Ceylon landed on their mission to Asoka; to this port they returned with a branch of the sacred *bo* tree, escorted by an army commanded by Asoka himself; and from it they set sail for Ceylon.†

The
Kalingas.

When the Brihadratha, the last Mauryan king, was murdered by his commander-in-chief (*circa* 180 B.C.), the empire was dismembered. Kalinga once more became independent, and, according to the inscription on the elephant cave of Udayagiri in the Purī district, Khāravela, the Kalinga monarch, invaded Magadha and put its ruler to rout. At this time the Kalinga kings may have recovered possession of Midnapore, for in the *Mahābhārata* Kalinga is described as extending southwards from the junction of the Ganges with the sea. At the same time, whether subordinate or independent, the area now included in the district apparently formed part of the kingdom of Tāmralipti, the distinct entity of which is admitted in the same epic.‡

Gupta
empire.

The district subsequently passed under the rule of the Gupta emperors. Between 405 and 411 A.D., during the administration of Chandragupta Vikramāditya, it was visited by the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien. He described it (Tāmralipti) as a kingdom "at the sea mouth" containing 24 Buddhist monasteries with resident priests, in which the law of Buddha was generally respected. Fa-Hien himself remained here for two years writing copies of the sacred books and drawing image-pictures. He then embarked on a merchant vessel and sailed to Ceylon. From his account it is clear that Tāmralipti was still an important sea port, and this is confirmed by the fact that it is mentioned by Ptolemy (*circa* 150 A.D.) in his geography, being placed by him on the Ganges under the name of *Tamabites*.

Huen
Tsiang's
account.

After the overthrow of the Guptas, the district appears to have formed part of a kingdom under Deva-rakshita (sixth century A.D. ?), the *Vishnu Purāṇa* referring to his guarding "the Kosalas,

* S. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, p. 201.

† V. A. Smith, *Asoka*, pp. 166, 168.

‡ Manmohan Chakravarti, *Notes on the Geography of Bengal*, J. A. S. B. 1902, p. 290.

Odras, Tāmraliptas and the sea-coast town." In the seventh century it was conquered by the Bengal king Sasānka, and afterwards by the emperor Harshavardhana, both of whose empires extended as far south as Ganjām. During the rule of the latter (about 640 A.D.) it was visited by the well-known Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsiang (Yuan Chwang). According to his account, the country (Tan-mo-li-ti, i.e., Tāmralipti) was 1,500 or 1,600 *li* (i.e., about 250 miles) in circuit. It was a low-lying country situated on the sea coast, which here formed a bay, with a wet soil and hot climate. The land was regularly cultivated, and produced flowers and fruit in abundance. The people were rich and prosperous owing to their trade, gems and wonderful articles of value being plentiful. They were rude in manners but courageous, and were partly Buddhists, partly heretics. There were 50 Deva (i.e., Brahmanical) temples and 10 Buddhist monasteries with 1,000 priests. The capital, which was near an inlet of the sea, was 10 *li* (2 miles) in circuit, and by its side was a stūpa built by Asoka*. From here Hiuen Tsiang proposed to sail for Ceylon, but was dissuaded on account of the danger of cyclones, and eventually he went by land. Other Chinese travellers also mention the port. I-tsing landed here from China (circa 671), and Hur Lun, the Corean, remarked:—"This is the place for embarking for China from East India and close to the sea."†

The kingdom of Tāmralipti survived for several centuries, ORIYA RULE. but was eventually absorbed in the kingdom of Rādha, i.e., Western Bengal. Between 1021 and 1023 A.D. Rājendra Chola Deva made a raid into the south of Rādha, which was then under a king named Ranasūra, but his raid did not lead to any permanent conquest. A century later, however, Chodaganga Deva defeated the king of Mandār, whose territory appeared to have comprised southern Rādha, and annexed the whole of that country including the Midnapore district. From this time may be dated the beginning of the downfall of the port of Tāmralipti, for it became merely a frontier town of the Ganga kings, subject to attack and devastation.

When the Muhammadans appeared on the scene, they drove the Oriyās gradually southwards, and for a considerable time the river Dāmodar was the boundary between the kingdoms of Bengal and Oriassa, Midnapore, with the Arāmbāgh subdivision of the Hooghly district, forming the frontier of the latter kingdom. In the time of Hussain Shāh (1493-1518) Arāmbāgh

* S. Beal, *Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Vol. II, pp. 200, 201; A. Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, p. 504.

† Beal's *Life*, page 13, and page xxviii (introduction).

was wrested temporarily from the Surjyavansa kings of Orissa, but during the internecine war of the Musalmāns, in the time of Sher Shāh's descendants, the Oriyā king Makunda Harichandan reconquered a part of the Hooghly district up to Tribeni. In 1568 Sulaimān Karārāni, the Afghān king of Bengal, sent a force southwards under his son Bayāzid, who, passing through Jhārkhand, penetrated to the heart of Orissa. The Oriyā king was defeated, and was soon afterwards killed while suppressing a local revolt. Midnapore, with the whole of Orissa up to the Chilka lake, then passed under the sway of the Afghāns.

The rule of the Oriyās thus lasted for about 4½ centuries, and Midnapore, as a frontier tract, was constantly exposed to raids and invasions. Some idea of the internal state of the country during their administration may be gathered from the brief accounts given in the biographies of the great Vaishnava apostle Chaitanya, who, in 1509, passed through the district on his way to Puri. After crossing the Dāmodar and Mantreswar rivers, Chaitanya came to Hājipur and thence went *via* Midnapore and Nārāyan-garh to Jaleswar on the Subarnarekhā river. The country appears to have been in a very disturbed state; several Hindu temples lay in ruins; pirates gathered on the rivers and robbers on the land; the villages were few and far between; and the Yavanas were dreaded.* Cultivation evidently had decreased and trade had dwindled, thus helping to complete the ruin of Tamlūk.

AFGHAN
RULE.

Midnapore appears to have fared no better under the Afghāns. The few remaining years of Sulaimān's life were spent in suppressing revolts in Orissa, while his son Dāūd Khān became involved in war with the emperor Akbar; and for nearly thirty years the district was the theatre of the struggle between the Afghāns and Mughals for the mastery of Orissa and Bengal. The oppression suffered by the people during these thirty years may, to some extent, be realized from the introduction to the poem *Chandi* by Kavikankan Mukundaram Chakravarti (*circa* 1600), who was himself forced to migrate from his village in Burdwān to Aradā in Midnapore. The ryots suffered from the exactions of the *dihidārs* or village officials, and guards were posted at their doors to prevent them absconding. They could pay only by selling their stock of cattle and paddy, but as all wanted to sell and few could buy, a rupee's worth sold for only ten annas. The *poddārs* or money-changers were death (*Yama*) to the people, for they charged 2½ annas discount on the

* The *Kedārā* of Govinda Dās; *Chaitanya Bhāgavata* of Brindaban Dās; and *Chaitanya Charit-amrita* of Krishna Dās.

rupees, and as usurers they exacted interest of one pie per rupee daily.*

This troubled period began with the revolt of Dāūd Khān in 1574. After the loss of Patna and the capture of his capital, Tanda, by the Mughals, Dāūd Khān retreated from Sātgaon to Din-kasāri (evidently the modern Kesiāri in this district) to collect his scattered forces. Hearing of this, Todar Mal, who had been sent in pursuit, wrote to the Viceroy Munim Khān for reinforcements, which were sent up under Muhammad Kulī Khān Birlās. The combined Mughal forces then marched to Goālpārā (*parganas* Kāsijora and Shāhpur), ten *kos* from Din-kasāri, and Dāūd Khān waited for them at Dhārpur (*pargana* Dīparoi?). Todar Mal first sent a detachment of troops against Dāūd's cousin Junaid, who was trying to effect a junction with him, and when they were driven back marched with all his army to their assistance. The Afghāns, unable to face him, fled to the jungles; Dāūd Khān retreated, and Todar Mal halted at Midnapore, where his colleague, Muhammad Kulī Khān, died (December 1574) after a few days' illness. Dissensions now broke out among the Mughal commanders. Todar Mal, dubious of his authority among the Muhammadan nobles, returned to Madāran, only to be deserted by some of his Amīrs. On his reporting the state of affairs to the Viceroy, Munim Khān, other Amīrs were sent to support him, and he then marched to Obitwā (a *pargana* in the Ghātal subdivision), where he was joined by the Viceroy. Dāūd Khān, who had in the meantime reorganized his army, advanced to meet them, and entrenched himself at Haripur, thus blocking the main road to Orissa, but Munim Khān turned his position. On this, he resolved to give battle.

The numbers on both sides were nearly equal, but the Afghāns had 200 elephants along their line, with which they hoped to break through the Mughal squadrons and clear the way for their cavalry. The Mughals, on the other hand, had a number of swivels and small cannon mounted on carriages, which soon drove back the elephants in rout. The Afghān horse, however, broke their centre, slew a noted Mughal commander named Khān-i-Alam, and wounded Munim Khān, the Khān-i-Khānan, himself. His horse ran away with him, the Mughal forces fell into confusion, and the day seemed lost. At this juncture, Todar Mal, who commanded the right wing, flung himself on the Afghāns, crying—“What matters it if Khān-i-Alam is dead? Why fear, even if the Khān-i-Khānan has run away? The empire is ours.” The

MUGHAL
CONQUEST

Battle of
Mughal-
mārī.

* A *Glimpse of Bengal in the 16th century*, Calcutta Review, 1891, pp. 352.

Afghāns gave way before his onset and were driven back on the centre, where Dāūd Khān was. Seeing that the battle was going against him and that many of his best officers had been killed, Dāūd Khān lost heart and fled to Cuttack, where in April 1575 he executed a treaty by which he swore allegiance to the emperor and was allowed to retain Orissa. This battle, which took place on the 3rd March 1575, was the first great battle between the Afghāns and the Mughals in Bengal. It extended over some 6 miles, and its site is referred to as Takaroi (the modern Tarkuachaur) in the Akbarnāma, as Bachora in the Tabakati, and as Bichwa by Badāoni, *i.e.*, probably Baryachaur. The battle is still commemorated by the name of a village near the Grand Trunk Road 6 miles north-west of Tarkura village, *viz.*, Mughalmāri, *i.e.*, the Mughals' slaughter; and it is generally known as the battle of Mughalmāri.

Munim Khān having died of fever at Gaur in October 1575, Dāūd Khān again revolted and recovered Bengal. His triumph was, however, short; for, in July 1576, he was defeated at Rajmahal, captured and executed. The Afghāns, having lost their leader, submitted, but only waited for their opportunity. This soon came with the formidable revolt which broke out in the imperial army in 1580. Taking advantage of this, the Afghāns of Orissa rose under Katlu Khān, and in 1581 overran Orissa and the south-west of Bengal. It took Akbar's generals nearly three years to recover Bihār and the greater part of Bengal from the rebellious Mughals, and in the meantime the Afghāns held the country up to the Dāmodar. At last, in 1583, when the imperial authority had been re-established, a large army, was sent to expel them, and Katlu Khan was forced to fall back on Orissa. Next year (1584) the Afghāns again took the field, but on the advance of the Mughal army retreated, hotly pursued, to Takaroi, *i.e.*, Tarkua, and took shelter in the forests of Dharmpur. Soon after this the Viceroy of Bengal made a treaty with Katlu Khān, by which the latter was allowed to retain Orissa, including Midnapore, as a tributary chief.

In 1590 another attempt was made to wrest this part of the country from the Afghāns. Mān Singh, the Governor of Bihār, marched south to invade Orissa, but as the rainy season was approaching, was compelled to canton his army at Jahānābād, the modern Arāmbāgh in the Hooghly district. A detachment he sent forward under his son, Jagat Singh, was defeated, but soon afterwards Katlu Khān, who had advanced to Dharmpur, died, and another treaty was made with the Afghāns. This treaty, like others they had made, was soon broken. The Afghāns having

seized the temple of Jagannāth and occupied the territory of the Rājā of Bishnupur (the modern Bānkurā), Mān Singh again marched against them in November 1592. The Afghāns took up a position in the forests of Midnapore, and a hotly contested battle was fought along the banks of the Subarnarekhā, which ended in their defeat. Mān Singh then marched on to Jaleswar (Jellasore), and by March 1593 had completed the conquest both of Orissa and Midnapore.

As a means of pacifying the country, he transferred a number of Afghāns to *jāgirs* in *sarkār* Khalifatabād (Khulnā and South Jessore), but this expedient was not successful; for in 1599 the Afghāns of Orissa, taking advantage of his temporary absence from Bengal, revolted under Usmān Shujawāl and once more took possession of Orissa and West Bengal. Mān Singh hurried back from Ajmir, and decisively defeated them at Sherpur Atai (in Birbhūm) in 1601. Usmān retreated to Orissa, where ten years later the Afghāns once again endeavoured to recover their lost power. Usmān sallied forth at the head of 20,000 Afghāns, but was defeated and killed in a battle fought on the banks of the Subarnarekhā in 1611. After this, the Afghāns gave no more trouble.

During the Afghān rule, the district appears to have been comprised in two *sarkārs*, viz., Jaleswar and Madāran. Its north-eastern and eastern portions lay within Madāran (*mahāls* Chitwā, Mandalghāt and Hijli), and the rest of the district, with 23 or 24 *mahāls*, was included, partly or wholly, in *Sarkār* Jaleswar, the land revenue amounting roughly to more than ten lakhs of rupees. The manufacture of salt appears to have been started on the sea-board, but the revenue from that source and from timber and other jungle produce is not known. The chief route was naturally the royal, or Pādshahi, Road, along which the contending armies marched. From the accounts of their marches we may conclude that this road, starting from Jahānābād, where it was joined by roads from Burdwan and Sātgaon, went south-west to Madāran, thence south-east along the Dwārakeswar river to Chitwā in Dāspur thāna, and thence nearly south to Goḷpārā near the modern Pānskurā. From this place it apparently passed due east to Midnapore, following very much the same line as the Grand Trunk Road; and from Midnapore it ran a little to the west of the Orissa Trunk Road, through old villages like Kesiāri and Gaganeswar, until it joined the Subarnarekhā river at Jaleswar.

After the Mughal conquest Midnapore continued to form MUGHAL part of *Satāh* Orissa, to which a separate governor was sent RUIN.

direct from the imperial court in the time of Jahāngir. In the reign of Shāh Jahān, Orissa was placed under the control of his second son, Shāh Shujā, who was appointed Governor of Bengal. During the second viceroyalty of this prince (1646-58) a resettlement of Bengal and Orissa took place, in which *sarkār* Jaleswar was cut off from Orissa and annexed to Bengal. It was now subdivided into six *sarkārs*, Goālpārā, Mājyāthā (with the salt *maḥāls*), Majkuri, Jaleswar, Remunā and Bastā, the last three lying chiefly in the modern district of Balasore. The main object of this measure was apparently to protect the coast, which was exposed to the raids of Portuguese and Arakan pirates, by bringing it within the scope of the operations of the imperial fleet (*navāra*), which had its head-quarters at Dacca.

European
trade.

During this period trade appears to have flourished. Tamlūk, it is true, had lost its old importance, but Hijili had become a great trade centre, described as follows by Ralph Fitch in 1586:—"To this haven of Angeli came every year many ships out of India, Negapatam, Sumatra, Malacca and divers other places, and lade from thence great store of rice and much cloth of cotton, wool, and sugar and long pepper, great store of butter, and other victuals." The Portuguese had an agency at Hijili, from which, however, they were ousted by the Mughals in 1636*; and in the second quarter of the seventeenth century the Dutch began to trade there. The English appeared as rivals in the latter half of that century, the larger English vessels loading and unloading at Hijili on account of the dangers of navigation on the Hooghly. Later on, the English began to trade in the interior, especially at Chandrakonā (for sugar)† and at Rādhānagar, which, according to Alexander Hamilton (*circa* 1720), was "famous for manufacturing cotton cloth and silk *romuals* or handkerchiefs." The French and Dutch also sent agents to the Ghāṭāl subdivision, but their trade was not nearly so large as that of the English.

The trade along the sea-board is referred to as follows by Valentyn (1724):—"Hingeli was formerly one of our (Dutch) chief settlements, and the Portuguese also had here their quarters and a church. Rice and other articles were chiefly sold here, as also at Kindua, Kenka and Badrek, but we afterwards abandoned all these places. Tamboli and Banzia are two villages where the Portuguese have their church and their southern trade. There is much dealing in wax here." From this it appears that Tamlūk (Tamboli) had not been altogether abandoned, and still contained a Portuguese settlement. This is confirmed by Gamelli Careri,

* W. Hedges' *Diary*, Yule, Vol. II page 240.

† C. R. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Volume II.

who visited India in 1695 and wrote that the Portuguese "further subdued . . . Tambulin in the kingdom of Bengala."

Tamlük appears also to have been a slave market, referred to as follows in the Persian account of Shihâb-ud-dîn Talish (circa 1665). "From the reign of the emperor Akbar, when Bengal was annexed to the Mughal empire, to the time of the conquest of Châtgaon (Chittagong) during the viceroyalty of Shaista Khân, Arakan pirates, both Magh and Feringhi, used constantly to come by the water-route and plunder Bengal. They carried off the Hindus and Muslims, male and female, great and small, few and many, that they could seize, pierced the palms of their hands, pressed thin canes through the holes, and threw them one above another under the deck of their ships. In the same manner as grain is flung to fowl, every morn and evening they threw down from above uncooked rice to the captives as food. Sometimes they brought the captives for sale at a high price to Tamlük and the port of Baleswar (Balasore), which is a part of the imperial dominions and a dependency of the province of Orissa. The manner of the sale was this. The wretches used to bring the prisoners in their ships, anchor at a short distance from the shore of Tamlük or Baleswar, and send a man ashore with the news. The local officers, fearing lest the pirates should commit any depredation or kidnapping there, stood on the shore with a number of followers, and sent a man with a sum of money to the pirates. If the terms were satisfactory, the pirates took the money and sent the prisoners with the man. Only the Feringhi pirates sold their prisoners."*

During the seventeenth century the tranquillity of the district appears to have been disturbed on only three occasions. The first was in 1622, when Prince Khurram (afterwards the emperor Shah Jahân) revolted against his father and marched northwards from the Deccan through Orissa and Midnapore, driving Ahmed Beg Khân, the Governor of Orissa, before him to Burdwan. Having taken that town, the Prince defeated and killed the Nawâb, Ibrâhim Khân, and for two years was master of Bengal. In 1624, however, he was defeated near Allahâbâd by the imperial forces and then fled to the Deccan through Midnapore.

The second occasion was when war broke out between the English and the Nawâb. Charnock, after abandoning Hooghly, moved down the Hooghly and, having destroyed the fort of Tanna, sent Captain Nicholson with one-half of his forces and the fleet to take possession of Hijili. This he did easily enough, for the island with its fort and batteries had been deserted by the Musalmâns. Charnock himself arrived

* *The Feringhi Pirates of Châtgaon*, J. A. S. B., 1907, page 422.

there with the rest of the forces on 27th February 1687 and, anticipating attack, began to fortify the island. The following account of the siege which ensued is quoted from Sir W. W. Hunter's *History of British India*:—

"A high dyke, like the rampart round a Roman encampment, now encircles Hijili and defends it from inundation. It was then an island swamp, separated by channels from the main land, and but half rescued from the sea; 'having a great store of wild hogs, deer, wild buffaloes and tigers,' very fertile at places above the water-level, yet so unhealthy that it had passed into a native proverb.* In 'that direful place,' as Charnook calls it, he and his hunted four hundred seized a little fort, a mere shell surrounded by a thin wall now nearly submerged by the river, but with their ships in front and creeks all round. The Viceroy's army of 12,000 men closed in behind, cut off supplies, pounded the garrison with cannon across a too narrow creek, and forced our ships from their anchorage. On May 28th, 1687, the besiegers were only driven out of the trenches by desperate fighting.

'Our starving men could do no more. In the three months Charnook had buried two hundred soldiers, another hundred lay sick or wounded, only one hundred remained able to bear arms, many of them tottering invalids, almost all emaciated with fever and ague. Of forty officers, only himself, one lieutenant and four sergeants were alive and fit for duty. His principal ship sprang another great leak, not one or the others was half-manned, and the end seemed to have come, when a vessel carrying the English colours hove in sight with seventy fresh men on board. By an audacious stratagem, Charnook magnified his reinforcements into a new army, and displayed a delusive show of strength with banners, trumpets, drums and loud huzzas. The Mughal general, completely deceived, held back, and on June 4th sent a flag of truce. Charnook, who had been the soul of the defence, now obtained an honourable capitulation. The general agreed to procure the Viceroy's acceptance of the twelve articles of January, and on June 11th Charnook marched out the remnant of his men, gaunt and ragged, yet with drums beating and colours flying."

The third and last occasion that the district was exposed to war during this century was in 1696. Subha Singh, zamindar of Ohitwa and Bārdā (two *parganas* in the Ghatal subdivision), broke out in rebellion and was joined by a contingent of Afghans under Rahim Khān. The allied forces defeated the Rājā of

Subha
Singh's
revolt.

* It is one thing to go to Hijili, but quite another to come back alive."

Burdwān, and then besieged and took the fort at Hooghly. In a short time the rebels overran the whole of West Bengal from Midnapore to Rajmahāl, and at length, crossing the river, harried Central Bengal including Murshidābād. Subha Singh was killed by the daughter of the Burdwān Rājā, whom he tried to ravish, and was succeeded by his brother Himat Singh. After ravaging the country for some time, they were defeated near Bhagwāngola (Murshidābād) by the newly appointed *Faujdar*, Zabardast Khān, and were driven to the west of the Bhāgirathi river. There they continued their depredations; and when Prince Azim-us-Shān, who had been appointed Governor of Bengal, arrived at Burdwān, they attacked him. In this battle Rahim Khān was killed, and his forces were routed. The rebel Afghāns were then hunted down, and peace was again restored to the country.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century some important administrative changes were carried out during the vigorous rule of Jāfar Khān, *alias* Murshid Kuli Khān, who was first appointed *Diwān* of Bengal and Orissa, and next became Deputy Nāzim, and then Nāzim, of the two provinces. He carried out an important settlement of the province in 1722 and grouped Bengal in thirteen large divisions, called *chaklās*. The area included in this district was divided between *chuklās* Hijli (including the salt *mahāls*), Hooghly and Burdwān, besides the zamindāri of Tamlūk; these *chaklās* were again subdivided into a large number of *parganas*.

During the rule of Ali Vardi Khān the district was again harassed by continual warfare. Scarcely had he obtained the Nawābship of Bengal than he marched (in 1740) against Murshid Kuli Khān, Governor of Orissa, who had refused to acknowledge his suzerainty. At Midnapore he secured the adherence of the zamindārs by means of *khilats* and gifts;* then moving on to Jaleswar, he forced the passage of the Subarnarekhā river against some troops of the Rājā of Mayūrbhanj, and in February 1741 decisively defeated Murshid Kuli Khān. After this he took possession of Orissa, and marched back; but soon after he had left, Murshid's son-in-law imprisoned his deputy, and Ali Vardi Khān had to march again to Cuttack through Midnapore. The campaign was short but successful, and Ali Vardi, anticipating no danger, disbanded his new levies and permitted a large number of his soldiers to return to their homes. He himself, with a force of only 5,000 or 6,000 men, marched back leisurely, "hunting, sporting and seeing the country."

* *Riyāsu-s-Salātin* (translation), page 327.

Marāthā
war.

When he was near Midnapore, word was brought in that a force of 40,000 Marāthā horse under Bhāskar Pandit were within 40 miles and advancing rapidly. The Nawāb, who was then at his midday prayers, at once replied :—"Where are the infidels, and where is the spot where I cannot chastise them?" He soon found that his boast was vain, for the Marāthās, having made their way through Mayūrbhanj and Pachet, were moving towards Burdwān, to the relief of which he hastened back. There he was attacked by the Marāthās, and had to beat a retreat to Kātwa and thence to Murshidābād, which he reached in April 1742, only to find that the Marāthās had already sacked its suburbs. Soon after this, the Marāthās captured Hooghly, and the Nawāb "whose forces had been greatly reduced both by a campaign of twelve months and by labour, sickness and famine, concluded that, as the rainy season was at hand, it would be too late to think of driving the Marāthās out of his country; and that the only part left for him was conserving the city and its territory." The Marāthās took advantage of his inaction and spread far and wide over the country. The *Faujdār* of Midnapore, Mir Kalandar, it is said, found means to secure his fort, but the whole of the district, and indeed the whole of Bengal west of the Ganges, passed into the hands of the Marāthās.

In October 1742, after the rains were over, Ali Vardi Khān sallied forth with a large force and drove the invaders before him. The Marāthās evacuated Midnapore and the other districts they had seized, Bhāskar retreating through Pachet, where his troops lost their way in the forest. Bhāskar, realizing that it was impossible to get through to his own country (Nāgpur), left the management of the march to his ally, Mir Habib. The latter led them to "the woods of Bishnupur (Bānkura), from whence he proceeded through the plain of Chandrakona and at last emerged near Midnapore." Then, hearing that Ali Vardi Khān was still pursuing them, the Marāthās retreated from Midnapore to Orissa.

In 1747 Ali Vardi Khān, determined to expel the Marāthās from Orissa, made Mir Jāfar Khān *Faujdār* of Midnapore and Hijili, and placed him in command of 7,000 horse and 12,000 foot. Mir Jāfar, on arriving at Midnapore, defeated a body of Marāthās and Afghāns, who fled to Jaleswar. Then, hearing that Jānoji was marching against him with a large army, he retreated without striking another blow to Burdwān, pursued by the Marāthā van-guard. Next year we find that Jānoji retired to Midnapore on the approach of the rains and cantoned his troop

there. In 1749 he again fell back on it, but soon marched off to Nāgpur leaving a detachment under Mir Habib.

In 1750 Ali Vardi Khān once more marched to Midnapore, where the Marāthās did not venture to give him battle but retired to Cuttack. He crossed the Kassai without opposition, and "resolved to secure the passes so well, that his obstinate enemies should find it difficult to penetrate into his dominions for the future. He therefore determined to pass the season at Midnapore, where he ordered his troops to barrack themselves; and where he gave the *Faujdarī* of that place and country to Alā Kuli Khān, commander of Sirāj-ud-daula's brigade". Sirāj-ud-daula himself was sent with a detachment to Balasore, from which he soon returned after a successful expedition. "The two armies joined at Nārāyangarh; and Sirāj-ud-daula, having hastened to embrace the feet of his grand father, filled the old man's heart with inexpressible joy." The two armies then cantoned at Midnapore, but Ali Vardi soon had to leave on receiving news that the Marāthās had got behind him and were marching on Murshidābād. The marauders having evaded his pursuit, he marched back to Midnapore, and, not being able to get intelligence of the Marāthās' movements, encamped in his old cantonments.

The dispositions he made are thus described in the *Sair-ul-Mutākhharin*:—"As the possession of the castle of that place seemed to have been all along their (the Marāthās') main object, and Haidar Ali Khān, the governor of it, seemed for want of a sufficient force incapable to preserve that stronghold from those invaders, the Viceroy resolved to pass the season in it; and, having ordered that the place and other buildings there should be put in repair and even enlarged, he sent for his veiled ones from Murshidābād and published that the army ought to provide themselves with necessaries to pass the rainy season in that neighbourhood. This order could not fail to constern both the officers and soldiers, who, tired with the length of this campaign, expected to return home at the beginning of the rains. They now lost the hope of meeting their families this year; but yet submitted to their fate, and everyone commenced providing himself with a *cahut* and some covering of thatch or straw. Some days passed in this manner, every one thinking they would now repose for a whole season." Their hopes were frustrated, for news came that Sirāj-ud-daula had set out for Patna, intending to set himself up as an independent ruler. Thereupon, Ali Vardi went off post-haste to Murshidābād and thence to Patna, leaving the command of the army to Mir Jāfar Khān and Rājā Dulab Rām. Next year (1751), weary of the war, he made peace with the Marāthās. A

treaty was concluded, by which he relinquished to them the province of Orissa, as demarcated by the river Subarnarekhā, for payment of the arrears due to the troops of Rājā Raghuji Bhonsla; and over and above this assignment, he agreed to pay yearly twelve lakhs of rupees to the Rājā's agents, on condition that the Marāṭhās should not again set foot in his territory*. The Subarnarekhā was not, however, the real boundary, as the Marāṭhās held territory north-east of the river in *parganas* Bhogrāi, Kamardā, Patāspur and Shāhbanda, and in several villages of the present thāna of Gopiballabhpur.

Last days
of Mughal
rule.

The district does not again come into prominence till 1757 when the *Faujdar* was Rājārām Singh, who had been chief of Sirāj-ud-daula's Intelligence Department and is frequently referred to in the English records as "The Nabob's head spy."† Being in arrears with the revenue of Midnapore, he was ordered by Mīr Jāfar Khān to come to Murshidābād and give an account of his government. Although strongly advised by Rājā Dulab Rām to comply, he sent his brother and nephew in his place, who were immediately thrown into prison—a proceeding which Mīr Jāfar Khān justified to Clive by representing that Rājārām Singh had been an active enemy of the English and the medium of communication between the late Nawāb and Monsieur Bussey.‡ Upon this, the *Faujdar* gathered his troops, amounting to 2,000 horse and 5,000 foot, and wrote to Clive that, if he was attacked, he would take refuge in the jungles of his district, and hold out to the last. At the same time he promised, if Clive would guarantee his safety, to pay homage in person and make over to the Nawāb a lakh of rupees. Clive, who was desirous to preserve tranquillity, urged the Nawāb to accede to these terms and agree to a reconciliation. This advice was apparently not taken, for a force was sent to Midnapore to crush the *Faujdar*. Soon afterwards, however, a reconciliation was effected, for Clive persuaded Rājārām Singh to come from Midnapore and visit him, sending European troops to escort him from Pipili. Clive having guaranteed his personal safety, the *Faujdar* accompanied this force to Murshidābād.§

* *Sair-ul-Mutākharin* (translation, Calcutta, 1902), Vol. I, pages 276, 286, 406; Vol. II, pages 23, 27, 90, 91, 92, 94, 112, 113; Stewart's *History of Bengal* (1847), pages 283-85, 294, 295, 300-301.

† C. R. Hill, *Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol. I, pages xlii, 100, 120; Vol. II, pages 22, 127, 149.

‡ This allegation appears to have been true. See *Bengal in 1756-57*, Vol. II, pages 212, 214.

§ Broome's *History of the Bengal Army*, pages 122, 126, 127, 129.

In March 1760, during the invasion of the Emperor Shah Alam, the Marāthās again appeared in Midnapore under the command of Sheobat, "a chief who appears to have been ever ready to take advantage of any troubles in Bengal." Giving out that he came to support the cause of the Emperor, he defeated Khushial Singh, the Nawāb's officer in charge of Midnapore, and made himself master of the neighbourhood. He then pushed forward detachments to Khirpai and Bishnupur; from the former place he threatened Calcutta and Hooghly; from the latter he commanded Burdwān and secured the means of joining the Emperor in the event of his advancing towards Murshidābād. These proceedings caused considerable alarm in Calcutta, where the militia were called out. All armed natives not in the Company's service were also ordered to quit the settlement, for it was reported that Rājā Dulab Rām, who was then in Calcutta with a large body of followers, was in communication with Sheobat, and had instigated his advance. The Emperor, however, afraid to meet an English force which was sent against him, marched back to Patna; and in November 1760 Captain Martin White was sent, with a detachment of Europeans and sepoy and some artillery, to Midnapore, "which province he speedily brought into order after very little resistance."*

Shortly before this, the district had been ceded to the British by a treaty dated 27th September 1760, by which Mīr Kāsim Ali in return for his appointment as Nawāb Nāẓim, made a grant to the East India Company of the three districts of Ohittagong, Burdwān and Midnapore. All the district as now constituted did not, however, come under British rule, for the Patāspur *pargana* was in the possession of the Marāthās, who also held Orissa. The English territory was divided into three great divisions, viz., the *faujdāri* of Hijuli, and the *chaklas* of Midnapore and Jaleswar (Jalassore). The *faujdāri* of Hijuli, which was at this time attached to Hooghly, comprised the whole of *sarkār* Mālījyāthā, four salt *mahāls* in *sarkār* Jaleswar, and one large zamindāri (Tamluk) in *sarkār* Gōālpārā. *Chakla* Midnapore comprised the rest of *sarkār* Gōālpārā; some of the *mahāls* in that *sarkār* (e.g., Raipur, Barābhūm, Ghātsila and other jungly *mahāls* in the north-west) were subsequently detached from Midnapore and are now included in the districts of Bānkurā, Mānbhūm and Singhbhūm. *Chakla* Jaleswar included the rest of the *mahāls* in *sarkār* Jaleswar north of the Subarnarekhā river, some of which (Bhogrāi and others) now form part of the Balasore district. The *chaklas* of Midnapore and Jaleswar were placed under an officer, designated

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* *Brown's History of the Bengal Army*, pages 286-87, 312.

the Resident, whose duties were decidedly varied, for he was at once the head of the revenue, criminal and judicial administration and also did the work of Commercial Agent, Political Officer and Military Governor.

For three years (May 1774 to April 1777) Midnapore was directly under the Provincial Council of Burdwan, but in 1777 the supervision of revenue collections was entrusted to a separate officer, designated Collector, while another official was appointed Commercial Resident. In 1781 two important changes were introduced. The controlling revenue authority, the Provincial Council of Burdwan, was abolished, and its powers were transferred to the Committee of Revenue at Calcutta, now called the Board of Revenue. For the trial of civil suits, a civil court (*Diwāni Adālat*) was established at Midnapore, the Judge being also Police Magistrate, in which capacity he was authorized to arrest offenders, but not to try them: he was, in fact, not a Magistrate, but merely a police officer, until four years later, when he was given power to try petty offences. In 1787, all the three offices of Collector, Judge and Police Magistrate were vested in the same person, but this arrangement lasted only for a short time, as a separate Collector was appointed by 1793. The offices of Judge and Magistrate were, however, usually held by one person, who, in his capacity of Magistrate, committed serious cases to the native criminal courts (*Faujdāri Adālat*). In 1791 the latter were replaced by Courts of Circuit, the Judge of the Court of Circuit for the Calcutta division holding periodical sessions at Midnapore; under Lord Cornwallis' scheme of 1793, the designation of the civil court (*Diwāni Adālat*) was changed to *Zilā Court*.

The *faujdāri* of Hijili was subdivided into the two salt divisions of Tamlūk and Hijili, each under a Salt Agent, who was subordinate to the Collector of the Salt Districts. Each Agent also did some revenue work and disposed of petty criminal cases, more heinous cases being committed to, and tried by, the *Faujdāri Adālat* at Calcutta which, as stated above, was replaced by the Court of Circuit in 1791. In 1793 several important changes were introduced. The office of Collector of the Salt Districts was abolished; and orders were issued that the Salt Agents were to be divested of their powers as revenue and judicial officers, which were to be transferred to the Collector and the Judge-Magistrate of Midnapore. The charge of revenue collections was not, however, actually transferred till September 1796; and about 1800, the salt divisions appear to have been transferred to the Hooghly district: it was, in fact, not until 1836 that they became permanently part of Midnapore.

Thānas Ghātāl and Ohandrakonā formed part of the Hooghly district for a long time after 1795, when that district was first created. In 1826 the criminal jurisdiction of Ohandrakonā was transferred to Midnapore as the result of a petition from a large number of its inhabitants, but no change was made in its revenue jurisdiction. In 1837, however, both the thānas appear in the Hooghly district figures, and they were finally transferred to Midnapore in 1872. *Pargana* Bhogrāi and two other *parganas* of Hijili had been added to Balasore before 1836, and in 1870 Jaleswar and its neighbourhood were also transferred to the latter district. The Jungle Mahāls on the western border, most of which were dependent on the Midnapore zamindāri, were brought under direct control between 1767 and 1770; and two police thānas were established at Janpur in Baliabera and at Balarāmpur. Several of these *mahāls* now belong to other districts, *e.g.*, Phulkusuma, Raipur, Ambikānagar (called in old records Amainagar), Ohhātna and Supur to the Bānkurā district, Mānbhūm and Barābhūm to the Mānbhūm district, and Ghātsila to the Singhbhūm district. For a brief sketch of their administrative history the reader is referred to the article on Jungle Mahāls in Chapter XV.

In the early days of British administration, Midnapore had little tranquillity, for, being a border district, it was liable to invasion by the Marāthās, while its western portion was covered with jungle and inhabited by predatory tribes. What with the inroads, or the threatened inroads, of the Marāthās and of the levies of the Mayūrbhanj Rājā, the forcible exactions of armed *sannyāsīs* and *fakīrs*, the raids of the aboriginal tribes (generally known as *Chuārs*), and the turbulence of the jungle chiefs and their adherents, the country, more especially to the west and south, was continually disturbed. Even as late as 1800, after nearly forty years of British occupation, a Collector reported that two-thirds of Midnapore consisted of jungle, the greater part of which was uninhabited and inaccessible. For the protection of the district, sepoya were garrisoned in the fort at Midnapore and in Fort Knox near Jaleswar.

The Marāthās gave trouble from the start and overran part of the district when the first Resident, Mr. Johnstone, was in charge of it. In December 1764 they took the field in order to reduce some subordinate zamindārs, and a detachment had to be sent to Jaleswar to check any attempts they might make to cross the frontier. In April 1767 one Subhet (Subbet?) collected a body of men with seven guns at Patāspur, and sent emissaries to induce sepoys to desert from the Company's

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with the
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service. In June 1770 the *samindār* of Shāhbandar sent a body of his *paiks* to Napoochar in British territory, surrounded the houses and *golas* of the rice-dealers, and extorted what he claimed as arrears of rice duty.

For the next twenty years there were frequent disputes with the Marāthās on the south-west frontier, and the military were constantly called into requisition to repel their raids and to protect the Company's *ryots*. In March 1799, for instance, one Paikra Bhuiyā, a Marāthā *zamindar*, entered *pargana* Naurangaohaur with about 900 armed men and plundered several villages. He repeated the raid in the May following, when he and other *sardārs* on horseback led 1,600 armed Marāthās at night across the Subarnarekhā into the same *pargana*. Having been reinforced by one Bir Prasād Chaudhri of Balarampur, who brought a contingent of 300 matchlock-men, the Marāthās surrounded the sepoy guards at the two villages of Busania and Nalpura. They commenced their attack two hours before daybreak, and the battle raged till sunset, when the guards retreated, having expended the whole of their ammunition. The Marāthās thereupon sacked the abandoned villages, set fire to them, and carried off all the cattle and also the heads of their opponents who had fallen in the engagement. The Magistrate, in reporting the raid to Government, recommended that representations should be made to the Marāthā agent in Calcutta and full redress demanded, or one full company and a piece of ordnance should be stationed in the neighbourhood. He further stated that the Marāthās should be driven out of Ulmāra, which was the starting point from which they commenced their depredations, and that an expedition should be organized to take possession of it.

The Marāthās in Patāspur also gave trouble in the same year. The *samindār* of *pargana* Partabhan reported that the Marāthās from Patāspur were daily seizing, confining, and extorting money from, the *ryots* residing in the Company's territories. The Magistrate wrote to the Marāthā *tahsildār* of Patāspur, but the letter was returned unopened, and the bearer told that no consideration would be paid to it. Not unnaturally, the Magistrate thought it necessary for the immediate security of the *ryots* to send a party of sepoys to prevent any further outrages on British subjects. ✓

This *pargana*, surrounded as it was by British territory, was an Alsatia for robbers, criminals and smugglers. The resultant state of things was thus described in a letter of the magistrate dated 31st July 1800 :—"Thej Mahratta pergunnahs contain a

very considerable number of dacoits—some of them well known as such; others are more secret. Most of the proprietors of land and of those who possess wealth or influence in these pergunnahs are either dacoits themselves or connected with dacoits. Some of the persons employed by the Mahratta Government in the pretended administration of justice or in the collection of revenue are connected with dacoits and salt smugglers, receive as the reward of their assistance or connivance considerable contributions, and in some instance a share of the actual plunder. Dacoits, Chuars and plunderers of every description retire to this territory and occasionally return to commit depredations. Their inducements to reside there are the facility of pursuing their occupations of pillage and at the same time evading justice. Hence this part of the Mahratta territory is much better cultivated than the Company's lands which surround it. The lawless and turbulent Mahratta subjects are well protected in their persons and property, while I am conscious of my inability to afford the same protection to the peaceful and industrious inhabitants of this zillah. Criminals of every description, whose aim it is to evade justice, convicts escaped from jail, deserters, persons who have resisted judicial process and who are outlawed, to which may be added insolvent debtors and persons charged with crimes who fear to stand their trial, find an asylum in the heart of the Company's territories." The Magistrate wrote further that complaints of carrying off cattle from the neighbouring villages were very frequent, and the injured applied to him in vain for redress. A large quantity of salt was manufactured by the Marāthās, and the whole of it was smuggled to, and sold in, the Company's territory, to the great loss of the revenues of Government.*

An endeavour to remedy this state of affairs was made as early as May 1767, when Mr. Vausittart, the Resident of Midnapore, suggested to the President of the Council at Fort William that Bhelorachaur, south of the Subarnarekhā river, should be exchanged for Patāspur, in order to avoid disputes and make the English possessions more compact. In reply, the President, Mr. Verselt, wrote that negotiations regarding the whole of Orissa were in progress, and if it were necessary, Patāspur would be put in charge of the Resident at Midnapore. These negotiations, which had been started by Lord Olive in 1766, were unsuccessful. Subsequently, Warren Hastings tried to get a lease of the Orissa coast from the Bhonsla, but was also unsuccessful. The Marāthā possessions in Midnapore

J. C. Price, Notes on the History of Midnapore 370, pages 28-29.

and the adjoining tracts were at this time under the *Faujdar* of Balasore, and to guard their interests the East India Company had a Resident at Balasore, who also acted as postmaster and as agent for Marāthā salt. This arrangement continued till the British conquest of Orissa in 1803. In September of that year Colonel Fergusson's detachment at Jaleswar marched towards Balasore, of which they took possession without loss; and at the same time a small force occupied Patāspur. By the treaty concluded in the same year, that *pargana* was ceded to the English with Orissa.

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with
Mayur
bhanj.

Further trouble was caused by the Rājā of Mayūrbhanj, who was nominally subject to the Marāthā Governor at Cuttack. The Rājā held the *pargana* of Nayābasān (in the Jungle Mahāls of Midnapore) as a revenue-paying estate and quite distinct from his independent territory. Great difficulty was experienced in realizing the Government demands from him, and the records contain frequent allusions to raids and depredations committed by his levies upon the cultivators in the more settled parts of the district. In 1782 he set up a claim to the proprietary right of Bhelotachaur (a *pargana* now within the district of Balasore), but his claims were rejected by the Governor-General. In October 1783 the Collector of Midnapore reported that he was assisting another insurgent chief and raising an army for the invasion of the Company's districts. The Company thereupon concerted a plan of joint hostilities with the Marāthā Governor of Orissa, Rājā Lām Pandit, against the Mayūrbhanj Rājā, who a few months afterwards made his submission and agreed to pay a yearly revenue of Rs. 3,200 for his estate in Midnapore.

Sannyas-
sis.

Bands of wandering *sannyasis* or religious mendicants also helped to keep the country in a disturbed state. They travelled from place to place, chiefly from one sacred site to another, in large armed bands, often numbering several thousands. They were composed mostly of up-country people, but on the way their numbers were swelled by local recruits and bad characters. During their journeys they extorted money and food from the well-to-do villagers, forcibly looted granaries and houses, and ill-treated all who opposed them, in some cases beating them to death. The early British records contain many references to their incursions,* from which it appears that they travelled chiefly in Northern and Eastern Bengal; but as Midnapore lay on the way to Puri, it did not escape their visitations. In February 1773 a body of *sannyasis* was reported in the neighbourhood of

* Bengal Manuscript Records, Vol. IV, index to the word *Sannyasis*.

Khirpai (Ghatal subdivision), and the Government issued orders to the Resident to do his utmost to destroy them, take them prisoners, or expel them from the country. In March of that year another band, said to number 3,000, was reported to be in Raipur (now in Bānkurā), and Captain Forbes was sent against them, while the local samindārs were directed to assist him with all their available forces. The *sannyāsīs*, however, escaped, passing through the Jungle Mahāls from Phulkusuma to Silda, and thence to Alampur and Gopiballabhpur along the border of the Marāthā territory, too far from Midnapore for the authorities to intercept the main body. A detachment under Captain Edwards succeeded in coming up with some of them in June 1773, but the encounter ended in his defeat.

In October of the same year, two bodies of *sannyāsīs* were reported to be marching northwards from Balasore. Lieutenant Hearsey at Jaleswar was directed to prevent their entering the district by the Jaleswar road, and half a company was sent to reinforce him. The *sannyāsīs*, however, divided their forces and, turning off along the jungle roads, eluded the troops. In November their arrival in Mayūrbhanj was reported, and Captain Thomson was deputed with three companies and two field-pieces to intercept them, if they tried to pass through British territory. This they did not attempt to do, but marched away to the hills on their way to Prayāg (Allahābād).

The most persistent disturbers of the peace, however, were the ^{The} Chuārs. This term signifies in Bengali "an outlandish fellow," ^{Chuārs.} and was applied in Midnapore to the wild tribes who inhabited the Jungle Mahāls and the tracts beyond them. The following *parganas*, all of which are situated in the west or north-west of the district, were included in the Jungle Mahāls:—Brāhmanbhūm, Bāgri, Bhanjabbhūm, Bahādurpur, Dharinda, Diparoi, Chiara, Nayābasān, Bāliabera, Jhāgrām, Jāmbani, Kalyānpur, Silda or Jhatibani, Rohini-Mabhandār, Dips Kiārohand, Lālgarh or Sankakulia, and Rāmgarh. This tract of country is of considerable extent, and at the end of the eighteenth century was covered with wide stretches of jungle, its inhabitants being mostly *pāiks* and Chuārs, careless cultivators but expert in pillage. The lands were held under a kind of feudal tenure by the *sardars*, *pāiks* and others, who paid quit-rents and were ready to turn out for a raid at short notice. The jungle chiefs or samindārs, moreover, were a turbulent and independent class, described as follows in 1773:—"These samindārs are mere freebooters who plunder their neighbours and one another; and their tenants are banditti, whom they chiefly employ in their

outrages. These depredations keep the zamindars and their servants continually in arms; for after the harvest is gathered, there is scarcely one of them who does not call his tenants together, either to defend his own property or attack his neighbour."

The necessity of bringing these chiefs to book was realized at an early date. In March 1766 Government resolved to send an expedition into the country west and north-west of Midnapore in order to coerce them into paying revenue, and to capture and demolish as many of their strongholds as possible. Owing to the difficulty of collecting a sufficient number of sepoys, the expedition was put off till January 1767, when it was despatched under Ensign (afterwards Lieutenant) Fergusson, who set out with three or four companies of sepoys and a European sergeant or two. On 4th February he reached Kalyānpur, where the zamindar acknowledged his dependence and agreed to pay a higher revenue. The Jhāgrām zamindar proved refractory, upon which Fergusson proceeded against his fort, which he took on 6th February. The zamindar then submitted, and on his giving security and agreeing to pay a higher revenue, the fort was restored to him. Fergusson was equally successful with the zamindars of Rāmgārh, Lālgārh, Jāmbani and Silda, who came in and engaged to pay an adequate revenue. In this expedition Fergusson was accompanied by contingents from the Midnapore and Dharinda *parganas*, the former supplying 50 horse and 400 to 500 foot. In 1767 he went further afield and was engaged in establishing the British authority in the Jungle Mahāls now included in Singhbhūm, Mānbhūm and Bānkurā.

In December 1769, and again in November 1770, the Chuārs of the hills between Ghātsila and Barābhūm broke out, but did not make any raid into Midnapore. In fact, most of the early depredations of the Chuārs took place outside the Midnapore district; but as the hilly tract to the west as far as Singhbhūm was attached to the district, forces had to be sent from Midnapore to quell the disturbances and keep the Chuārs in order. These expeditions gave a great deal of trouble and were attended with some loss from the Chuārs' arrows, but more from illness.

Towards the close of the century the Chuārs broke out in open rebellion and extended their raids to the heart of the district. The outbreak began in April 1798, when two villages were burnt down in Silda. In the following month the Chuārs took the field in Raipur (now in Bānkurā district); and in July 400 headitti under a Bagdi leader appeared in thāna Chandrakonā. After this, predatory bands laid waste the country in many different parts of

the district, *e.g.*, *parganas* Kāsijora, Tamlūk (Bāsudebpur¹, Tarkuachaur and Jaleswar, but the west of Midnapore suffered most from their savage raids. In September the Chuārs were reported to be pillaging Nayābasān and Barajit, and in December they took possession of six or seven villages, and sacked fifteen more. One band was at work 10 miles from Balarāmpur; Rājgarh was plundered and burnt, and daily depredations were committed near Sālbanī, a village which they eventually pillaged. *Pargana* Midnapore itself was laid waste, and the Chuārs carried their devastations from thāna Nārāyangarh on the south to *pargana* Bhanjabhūm on the north. The ryots dared not cut their crops and streamed into Midnapore, Anandapur and other places protected by the Company's sepoy.

In the vicinity of the town of Midnapore there were three places where the Chuārs assembled in force, viz., Bahādurpur, Sālbanī and Karnagarh, the last place being the residence of the Rānī of Midnapore, whose zamindāri had been brought under *khas* management. From these places they started on their various raids in search of plunder, returning to divide the spoil; and the Collector was of opinion that if they were freed from the presence of the Chuār—a measure which, he thought, could be easily effected—tranquillity could be restored in a few days. However, whether it was owing to certain differences that had unfortunately arisen at this crisis between the Collector, Mr. Julius Mihoff, and the Judge-Magistrate, Mr. Robert Gregory, or perhaps because there was an insufficient body of troops stationed at Midnapore, no effective steps appear to have been taken to check the Chuārs, who went on plundering as before.

By the end of February they had pushed their incursions so far, that several villages contiguous to the town of Midnapore were laid waste and burnt, and the robbers had even the audacity to threaten to plunder and burn the town itself when the nights became dark. The Collector feared that the Chuārs would succeed in robbing the treasury; for his guard of *sebandis* had been reduced to 27 men, and he thought that, if they were attacked, they would make no resistance. On the 7th March he reported to the Board:—"No steps have been taken to disperse the Chuārs; on the contrary, they are daily committing the greatest outrages, to enumerate which would be intruding on the Board. The ryots of whole villages are daily coming into the town for protection, as they see themselves liable to be murdered and plundered, and no steps taken to disperse the Chuārs; and it is distressing to see them bereft of the means of getting a subsistence—also many hundreds

of the inhabitants of Midnapore, who procured a livelihood by cutting wood; this they are not at present able to do through the fear of being murdered. In short, all communication with the jungles is cut off." On the 16th March 1799 the Chuārs attacked Anandapur, where they killed two sepoy's and many ryots, the rest of the guard escaping to Midnapore; and on the 2nd April, after having twice sacked the village, they burnt it down.

Midnapore itself was threatened several times. On the 17th March the Collector wrote to Colonel Duun, commanding at Midnapore, stating that he had every reason to believe that the banditti would attack the town in the night, and requested him to permit the treasure in his charge to be lodged in the magazine. Again on the 21st he wrote:—"This town was to have been burnt the day before yesterday. All the inhabitants were so well informed of this their intention—for the Chuārs did not think it necessary to keep it a secret—that the greater part of the inhabitants left; but in consequence of my *diwān* having given out that fifty European soldiers and two companies of sepoy's had arrived, information was immediately sent to the Chuārs, and, from what I have heard through my *diwān*, I am in hopes that the banditti will be deterred from burning the town. At the same time, the inhabitants are under the greatest apprehensions, and a great many take shelter every night in my grounds with their children and such little property as they have. It is dangerous to travel even in the open plains through fear of robbers, for every vagabond has turned a thief, as they see they can plunder with impunity." A similar account was given by him in a report to the Board a few days before:—"I am at a loss for words to paint the situation of the district, particularly pergunnah Midnapore. I cannot remain an idle spectator of the innumerable outrages which are daily committed with impunity."

At length, the authorities were moved to action. Ausgarh and Karnagarh were taken, and the Rāni, who was suspected to be in league with the Chuārs, was brought to Midnapore as a prisoner on 6th April 1799. Five additional companies of sepoy's were ordered to the district on 20th May, and this force was divided into different detachments and posted to the principal villages and centres of disturbances; altogether, 309 *subaddars*, *jemaddars*, *hacildars*, *naiks* and sepoy's were stationed at Anandapur, Satpati, Karnagarh, Sālbani, Gopiballabhpur and Balarāmpur. The Chuārs and their confederates were now driven from one *pargana* to the other, and the ryots were

gradually induced to return to their homes and resume the cultivation of their lands.

By the middle of June 1799, the authorities began to get the upper hand, though for some time longer the Chuárs continued to commit sporadic depredations. They murdered six persons at Shiromani on 13th September; on the 26th two men were put to death near Anandapur; on the 9th October a party of Chuárs attacked a village 10 miles from Midnapore; and on 5th and 30th December 1799 they plundered several villages near the town. Gradually, however, the banditti were hunted down, and peace was restored. The state of the country in the meantime may be gathered from Mr. Price's remarks in *The Chuár Rebellion of 1799*:—"1799 A.D. is marked in the Midnapore annals as the year of the great Chuár rebellion ghastly with its tale of horrors and massacre; when all the evil passions of the infuriated *sardars* and *páiks* burst forth in a wild attempt to revenge the resumption of their *jágir* lands on the Government, if not to compel it to order a complete restoration of them. All the lawless tribes of the Jungle Maháls made common cause with the *páiks* and carried slaughter and flame to the very doors of the Magistrate's catcherry. The ordinary police and the military stationed at Midnapore were utterly unable to cope with the banditti, as they were called, and a reinforcement of troops had to be despatched to Midnapore. After a period of the greatest anxiety and suspense, after innumerable and most brutal murders, after the death of the Judge-Magistrate himself (previously Collector), who could bear the weight of his charge no longer, and succumbed under the accumulation of his troubles: it was not till the close of the year that the district was restored to a state of only partial tranquillity."

It was suspected that the disturbances were fomented by the servants of the dispossessed Midnapore Ráni and others, but the main cause of the outbreak appears to have been the issue of orders for the resumption of *paik jágir* lands in the zamindári of the Ráni. The aggrieved *páiks* consequently gave little aid to the authorities, while the bolder spirits joined the bands of Chuárs. In this connection the Collector reported to the Board on 25th May 1799:—"The resumption of the *paikán* lands had taken place in the years 1201 and 1204 (P. style); but a great part of the lands in question had been left uncultivated, and had suffered so rapid a decline that, excepting in the first year of the first and principal resumption, not only no part of the additional assessment laid upon the land had been realized, but every year there had arisen a considerable balance in the original *poshtkas*

jama, which had always been collected with great regularity. It was hardly a matter for surprise or indignation that, when the ancient occupants of the land, without having been charged with any crime or misconduct, saw their supposed rights, founded upon long possession of them, deliberately invaded in order to provide funds for the charges of the police, and at last found themselves either stripped of all their possessions or subjected to new demands of rent, which they were incapable of paying, they should have despaired of obtaining redress by a proper representation of their grievances, and have seized the first favourable opportunity that presented itself of taking up arms, and of attempting to recover by force what they thought had been taken from them with injustice, especially when it was considered that they were a rude and almost savage race of men, without any experience of the justice and humanity of the British Government, which did not appear to have been ever held out to them as the means to which they ought to look back with confidence for redress."

The Vice-President in Council in a letter, dated 15th March 1799, also censured the Board for the "injurious system of conduct pursued in the management of the *paikān* lands," and expressed much surprise "that the circumstances of the rapid decline of the revenue, and the disorder and difficulties attending the collections, have attracted so little attention on your part." The Board then directed that the settlement of the *paikān* lands should be postponed until the disturbances had been suppressed; and as the police *darogās* had failed to put a stop to them, the *samindārs* of the Jungle Mahāls were vested with police powers within their respective territories. The Board also directed that the regulations about arrears of revenue should not be enforced against defaulting estates situated in the jungle and exposed to the depredations of the *Chuārs* till tranquillity had been restored.* ✓

For some years later the *Chuārs* continued to give trouble, and in 1806 harried the country as far east as the *Bhograī pargana*. Shortly after this, a vigorous campaign was instituted against them, which is described as follows in Hamilton's *Hindustan* (1820):—"Although within 60 miles of Calcutta, up to 1816, owing to peculiar local obstacles, the authority of Government had never been firmly established in this tract (*Bāgri pargana*), nor had the peaceably disposed inhabitants ever enjoyed that protection which had been so effectually extended to all parts of the old provinces. In *Bāgri* the leaders of the *Chuārs* continued to act as

* J. C. Price, *The Chuār Rebellion of 1799*.

if they had been independent of any Government, and endeavoured to maintain their predominance by the most atrocious acts of rapine and, frequently, the murder of individuals in revenge for having given evidence against them. Besides perpetrating rapine and murder in the prosecution of their ordinary vocation, these Chuars were generally extremely ready to become the instruments of private malice among the inhabitants, when the malignity of their hatred stimulated them to a-sassination, which they were too cowardly to perform with their own hands.

“ Every attempt to establish an efficient police having failed, it became necessary to concentrate the powers usually vested in different local authorities in one functionary, under the immediate direction of the Governor-General, which was accordingly done, and Mr. Oakley deputed to execute the arduous commission. The first measure adopted by this gentleman was to ascertain the principal ringleaders of the banditti, in order that they might be specifically excluded from the general amnesty to be offered to the great majority of the Chuars. The next was to deprive them of their accustomed supplies of food, to encourage a spirit of active co-operation among the inhabitants, and generally to diminish the terror which the cruelty of the Chuars had impressed on the neighbouring villagers and cultivators. The success of these measures was becoming daily more conspicuous, when it was unfortunately arrested by the insurrection of the *pāṭhs* in the adjacent *pargana* of Bhaujābhūm. The effect of this commotion, however, was only temporary, for by the middle of 1816 the gangs of plunderers had been dispersed, and crimes of enormity nearly suppressed, while the current revenue due to Government was completely realized. In February 1816, the Chuār banditti consisted of 19 leaders and about 200 accomplices. In the course of a few months all the chiefs, except two, were apprehended, or fell in resisting the attempts to apprehend them; their frequent and pertinacious resistance being partly ascribable to their long habits of ferocity, and partly to their expectation of capital punishment if taken alive.”*

When the British took possession of the district in pursuance of their treaty with Nawāb Mir Kāsim Ali, they established a ^{British} factory for piece-goods at Midnapore town, which was under the control of the Resident. There was also a weaving factory at Khirpai in Ghātāl, but this was not under the Resident, being attached first to the Burdwān district, and subsequently to Hooghly on the formation of that district. Even without this charge, the commercial business of the Company formed no small part of the

* W. Hamilton, *Description of Hindoostan*, 1820, Vol. I, pp. 152-53.

Resident's work, and the early records of the district are full of correspondence on the subject. The following system was in vogue. The Resident entered into contracts with merchants for the supply of raw silk and of cotton and silk piece-goods. The merchants received advances (*dāṁi*), gave security, were bound to make good their contract within a specified time, and were prohibited from supplying similar goods to any other person. They, in their turn, contracted with the weavers and silk-rearers, and had to give them advances. The cloths were produced on the due date at the factory, where, after examination, they were packed in bales. The bales were then despatched to Calcutta with the Government treasure, i.e., the surplus of land revenue collections, under a guard. The bales contained usually not less than 100 and often as many as 120 pieces. Raw silk was sent chiefly from Rādhānagar (subsequently Ghātāl). In 1768 we find that the Resident, in order to develop the silk trade, offered land at low rents for mulberry cultivation, and tried to induce silk-winders from Kāsijora, Kutubpur and Nārājol to settle near Midnapore. Next year he renewed his offer, and a number of weavers deserted Khīrpai for Midnapore. In 1770 the Directors sent out an expert from Europe, named Grinaud, to improve the quality and colour of the piece-goods, and in 1777 an European official was stationed at Midnapore as Commercial Resident.

French
trade.

At this time, the French were the only other European nation who had any trade in the district. They had two small factories, one at Khīrpāi (Ghātāl), and the other at Mohanpur near Jaleswar, both under the Director and Council of Chandernagore. The chief articles produced were white cloths at Mohanpur, and cotton and silk cloths at Khīrpāi. Each *aurung* or factory was under a French Resident, who made advances to *dalāls* (brokers). The latter often owed considerable sums, which the French found considerable difficulty in recovering, their efforts to do so leading to complaints lodged before the British authorities. On one occasion, at least, the relations between the French and the English were distinctly strained, owing to political rather than commercial difficulties. This was in 1770, when the approach of a French force was apprehended. It was ascertained that a large quantity of rice was being stored for French agents at Khejri (Kedgerie) where it was guarded by several peons. The Resident sent one detachment there, and another to Contai, which subsequently marched to Amirābād, 4 miles nearer the river, to watch the movements of the French. The two companies were, however, withdrawn by the end of July 1770, when the rains had set

in, and it was found that the French had taken no further action.

The archæological remains still existing in Midnapore are ^{ARCHÆO-}interesting, as they reflect the characteristics of the various races ^{LOGY.} that have ruled or occupied the land. To begin with, the numerous small pillars lying on the plain of Kiārohand in thāna Gopiballābhpur appear to be memorial stones set up by the jungle tribes; some of them may be even prehistoric. Next, the Oriyā influence is distinctly traceable in the majority of the old temples, as might be expected from the fact that they held the district for several centuries. The Orissan tower form is adopted in the temples of Sarvvamangalā and Kanseswar at Garhbetā in the extreme north, in the Sahasralinga temple at Chandra-rekhāgarh in the south-west, in the temple of Syāmaleswar at Dāntan, and in several smaller temples of Siva found in different parts of the district. The body of the temple of Bargabhīma at Tamlūk is also not unlike an Orissan tower. The Bengali style of architecture was introduced chiefly from Bishnupur, and is of later date. The finely carved Pancharatna temple at Goāltor in Bāgri, the Lālji temple at Chandrakonā, the laterite temple of the Nārājol Rāj in the suburbs of Midnapore town, and various other smaller temples betray the influence of the Bishnupur variety of the Bengali style.*

The remains of many old forts are extant, for, in the troubled times before British rule was established, the most influential zamīndars in the plains had forts to which they could retire in case of invasion or in order to resist the demands of the authorities for land revenue. In the Jungle Mahāls also every petty chief had his fort (*garh*) enclosed by walls of laterite and surrounded by a ring-fence of thorny, almost impenetrable jungle. In the plains the place of the latter was taken by dense bamboo clumps, which also formed a good defence, as may be gathered from the following description of *kila* Maināchaurā. "It is surrounded by two ditches—one wet and one dry—both formerly very deep and broad, and filled with alligators. Within its inner ditch was another defence of closely-planted bamboos, so intertwined with each other as to be impervious to an arrow, and unapproachable by cavalry, which formed the main force of the Marāthā invaders. The ground thus enclosed is wide, and contains many houses." Another memorial of these times is found in the shape of large tanks excavated by local Governors or zamīndars, more particularly in the west of the district. In the Bāgri *pargana* several of these old tanks still supply the villagers with drinking

* M. M. Chakravarti, *Bengali Temples*, J. A. S. B., 1909.

water, and near Dāntan there are two fine tanks which were excavated during the period of Oriyā rule.

There are very few archæological remains dating back to the time of Muhammadan supremacy, though it is comparatively recent. Such as there are mostly lie along the old Pādshāhi Road, such as some mosques in Midnapore town and some tombs, none of which, however, are of any importance. An old mosque at Gaganeswar near the Kesiāri outpost appears originally to have been a Hindu temple built in the time of Kapilesvara Deva (1434-69 A.D.) *

* M. M. Chakravarti, *The Last Hindu Kings of Orissa*, J. A. S. B., 1900, pp. 180-82.

ADDENDUM.

According to the provisional totals of the census of 1911 the population of the district is 2,820,374.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

IN 1872, when the first census of Bengal was taken, the population of the district as now constituted was 2,542,920, but it fell to 2,515,565 in 1881 owing to the virulent epidemic of fever known as Burdwan fever, which, it is estimated, caused a mortality of 250,000 during the years in which it raged in Midnapore. Since 1881 there has been a steady growth of population, the number rising to 2,631,466 in 1891 and to 2,789,114 in 1901. This increase is the result of a rapid growth of the population along the sea-coast and the estuary of the Hooghly and a fair natural development in the healthy, but barren and sparsely inhabited, uplands in the west of the district, combined however with stagnation or decline in the ill-drained depression that intervenes between these two extremes. The following account of the census of 1901 is quoted from the Bengal Census Report:—

"Since 1881 the health of the district has been fair and the population on the whole has made satisfactory progress. Although much ordinary fever exists in the badly drained and flooded tracts, in other respects the health of the people shows a marked improvement, and during the last decade the district has been peculiarly free from cholera and small-pox epidemics. This is due in recent years to the opening of the railway through the district, which carries the crowds of pilgrims to Jagannāth, who previously plodded wearily on foot and spread disease in all directions along their line of march. The railway has benefited the district in many other respects. By facilitating the disposal of produce, prices have risen, and the cultivators, who enjoy fixity of tenure, are very well off. It has opened up several of the jungle thānas and stimulated trade. The decade has been a prosperous one, and in 1897, when the pinch of famine was keenly felt elsewhere, the birth-rate was unusually high—a circumstance attributed by the Magistrate to the prosperity of the people, who disposed of their hoards of rice at famine prices.

"In the district as a whole there has been an advance of about 6 per cent. in the population since 1891, as compared with a gain

of 4·6 per cent. in the previous decade, and a decrease of 1 per cent. in 1872-81. The Contai subdivision leads the way with an increase of 11 per cent. All the thanas in this subdivision have gained considerably, but especially Contai itself, which has added nearly a sixth to its population of 1891, and the other three thanas on the coast, which contain the great temporarily-settled estate of Majnamutha. The Ghátal subdivision has lost nearly 1 per cent of the population recorded at the last census. This decrease, as well as one of 1·3 per cent. in thana Debra and insignificant increases of ·6 and ·8 per cent., respectively, in thanas Sabang and Narayangarh, all in the Sadar subdivision, is largely due to the movement of a portion of the population from the densely populated and low-lying tracts in the north-east and centre of the district to the reclaimed *julpai* lands along the coast and tidal rivers in the Contai and Tamlük subdivisions. From the times of the Muhammadans these lands had been reserved by Government for the accumulation of salt and for the supply of fuel to boil the brine. The manufacture of salt by Government was stopped about forty years ago, and the lands, which are very extensive, were settled with various persons. After some time they began to be cleared and to be surrounded with embankments to keep out the salt water. Thus protected, they yield abundant crops and are still an attraction to cultivators from distant parts of the district. Unfortunately, the embanking of these lands is said to have caused deterioration in the beds of various tidal rivers and *khalas*, and so to have rendered more frequent the flooding of the low-lying tracts inland which have been previously referred to."

The following table gives the salient results of the census of 1901 :—

SUBDIVISION	Area in square miles.	NUMBER OF		Population	Population per square mile.	Percentage of variation in population between 1891 and 1901.
		Towns.	Villages.			
Midnapore ...	3,271	1	3,783	1,277,749	391	+4·5
Ghátal ...	372	5	1,042	324,991	874	-0·9
Tamlük ...	653	1	1,578	583,238	893	+9·0
Contai ...	849	...	2,062	603,136	710	+10·6
District Total	6,186*	7	8,464	2,789,114	638	+6·0

* Includes 41 square miles returned as uninhabited river beds.

The distribution of population depends more on the nature of the soil than on any other cause. The eastern half of the district, which is alluvial, is thickly populated, while the west of the district, where there is a laterite soil covered here and there with jungle, is sparsely inhabited, mostly by aboriginal tribes. The pressure of the population is greatest along the bank of the Rūpnārāyan and the estuary of the Hooghly, the maximum density being found in Tamlūk thāna, where there are 1,156 persons to the square mile. The town after which this thāna is named was once a famous sea-port, and though the sea has long since left it, it is still a place of considerable importance as the centre of the boat traffic on the Rūpnārāyan. Further inland the soil is still fertile, but the climate is bad, and the population gradually decreases. In the western half of the district the cultivable area is small, and the population steadily diminishes, until in the extreme west, on the confines of Singhbhūm and Mayūrbhanj, it is less than a quarter as dense as it is in Tamlūk, being only 259 per square mile.

As regards the density of population in the different subdivisions, it will be apparent from the table given above that the population is unequally distributed among them. The causes of this uneven distribution are permanent. Ghātāl and Tamlūk lie on the east of the district and consist of fertile rice-growing alluvial plains, while the Hooghly, Rūpnārāyan and Haldi supply easy water carriage for the export of grain and the carrying on of the trade. Contai, to the west of Tamlūk, lies on the sea-coast, and there are large tracts of sandy or salt-impregnated soil. Conditions in the Sadar subdivision are very different. Two-thirds of it lie on the laterite plateau running down from Binpur and Mānbhūm, and this barren soil cannot maintain a large agricultural population, for large tracts are covered by sal forest and jungle, on which little impression has been made.

The volume of emigration and immigration is comparatively small, for, according to the census of 1901, the immigrants number less than 50,000 and the emigrants 134,000, representing 1·8 and 4·8 per cent. respectively of the population. The number of immigrants is particularly small: indeed, Midnapore receives a smaller number of immigrants in proportion to its population than any district in West Bengal. If contiguous districts are excluded, the foreign-born population comes mainly from the United and Central Provinces, Outtaok and Shāhābād. There is a considerable permanent migration from the west of the district to Mayūrbhanj and to the Assam tea

gardens, and a fair amount of periodic emigration from the Contai, Tamlük and Ghátal subdivisions, the emigrants seeking employment as cultivators and field labourers in the Sundarbans and as mill hands and coolies in the metropolitan districts. It would appear from the proportion of women amongst them that many of the emigrants to the Sundarbans are beginning to settle down there permanently. The figures already given show that, on the whole, there is a small loss by migration, owing to the railway having facilitated the exodus of labourers and others in search of temporary employment.

Occupations.

Agriculture supports 77·2 per cent. of the population, industries 9·8 per cent, the professions 2·9 per cent, and commerce 0·5 per cent. The population is more distinctively agricultural than in any other part of West or Central Bengal. A third of the agricultural population are actual workers, and these include 662,000 rent-payers and 10,000 rent-receivers, while hordemen number 14,000 and field labourers 98,000. Of the industrial population 47 per cent. are actual workers, and of these rice pounders (19,000, mostly women), fishermen and fish dealers (19,000), servants, including barbers and washermen (24,000), cotton weavers (17,000) and mat and basket makers (15,000) are most numerous. A large number of women are employed in industrial occupations, especially in mat making and as servants. Among the professional classes, priests number 8,000 and religious mendicants 9,000, while 3,000 are employed in teaching. The number of general labourers (79,000) is large and there are no less than 12,000 beggars.

Towns and villages.

There are seven towns in the district, but none are of any great size. The largest is Midnapore with 33,140 inhabitants, but it has no important industry or trade and it shows no tendency to grow. Tamlük, the headquarters of the boat traffic on the Rūpnārāyan, added 22 per cent. to its population in the decade ending in 1901, but it still has barely 8,000 inhabitants. The other five towns, viz., Ghátal, Chandrakona, Kharār, Rāmjibanpur and Khirpai, are situated in the north-east of the district, which suffered from the Burdwan fever epidemic, and they have scarcely yet regained the population they then lost. Altogether 3 per cent. of the population is contained in these seven towns, and the remainder congregate in 8,464 villages, 3 per cent. of the rural population living in villages with 2,000 to 5,000 inhabitants, 40 per cent. in villages with 500 to 2,000 inhabitants, and 57 per cent. in villages containing under 500 persons.

Language.

The population is a polyglot one, 80 out of every 100 persons speaking Bengali, 10 Oriyá, 3 Hindi, and the remainder other